

Engaging your workers in risk management



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Your workers deal directly with the hazards and risks associated with their job on a daily basis. This gives them a good understanding of what can go wrong and why. They will also understand what will help make their job safer.

To assess the risks before you start, discuss the task with experienced workers and supervisors who are familiar with it – and also with less experienced workers (who can be a “fresh pair of eyes”). HSE guidance can help you conduct a thorough risk assessment and involve your workers in doing so, see: www.hse.gov.uk/risk/assessment.htm.

Three key steps to engage your workers in risk management

Step 1 At the beginning, ask:

- What has gone wrong in the past?
- Are there examples where near-misses have occurred doing this task?
- How often have these problems occurred?
- What is the worst-case scenario?
- Could a member of the public be affected?

Step 2 At the end of your risk assessment (and to help you develop a method statement) ask:

- Is there a safer way of doing this task?
- Are workers likely to implement any planned safety controls correctly?
- Do these controls make the job more difficult or inconvenient?
- Are there small changes that will improve the control method(s) in these respects?
- How will these controls work in adverse conditions (eg weather)?
- Will workers require additional briefing or instructions to use the safety controls?

Step 3 At a daily or pre-task briefing, check that any controls put in place on site are being effectively communicated to workers; ask:

- Does what actually happens on site match the agreed procedure for the job?
- Is the sequence of work clearly spelt out?
- Is everybody clear on:
 - who the supervisor is
 - whether specialist training or knowledge is required
- Will this task affect the public or other trades working nearby?
- Have today's weather and site conditions been taken into account?
- How will feedback be given on completion, or if a change occurs before then?

For further information see: www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm

The Leadership and Worker Involvement toolkit is aimed particularly at small and medium sized businesses and is designed to help improve your health and safety and bring additional benefits to your business performance and productivity. See: www.hse.gov.uk/construction/lwit/