

Example risk assessment for an estate agency

Setting the scene

The office manager carried out the risk assessment in this estate agency, which employs 12 staff and is located on a high street. The shop deals primarily with domestic premises, with occasional involvement in the sale and letting of commercial premises. The shop is open from 9.00 am to 6.00 pm, six days a week and 10.00 am to 4.00 pm on Sundays.

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.

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 'Office health and safety' web pages to find out where hazards can occur, and to look for information on work-related violence;
 - walked around the shop, stockroom and other areas, noting what might pose a risk and taking what he had learned from the HSE web pages into consideration;
 - talked to the deputy manager and staff to learn from their knowledge and experience, and to listen to their concerns and opinions about health and safety issues; and
 - looked at the accident book, to find out which particular risks have previously resulted in incidents.
- 2 The manager 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. These controls were then compared to the good practice guidance set out in HSE's publications and website. Where existing controls were not considered

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

- 4 Putting the risk assessment into practice, the manager set out when the actions that were needed would be done and who would do them. The manager decided that these actions would be ticked off as they were completed, the findings would be discussed with staff, and risk assessment displayed in the staffroom. 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 major changes in the workplace happened.

Company name: Smith's Estate Agency

Date of risk assessment: 1/3/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Lone working Verbal and/or physical assault	Staff, either at the office or when travelling to or visiting premises, may suffer verbal or physical assault from customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff write visit details in the office diary. ■ Visiting staff carry a mobile phone and personal alarm. ■ Customers causing concern are always seen by two reps. ■ There are always at least two staff members in the office. ■ Staff are confident in dealing with people who may be under stress. ■ Two staff members have had training in dealing with confrontational situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Manager and office administrator to monitor visiting staff whereabouts. 	Manager and office administrator	20/3/07	20/3/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Visiting staff to phone in if itinerary changes. ■ Visiting staff to put car details in the diary. 	All staff	20/3/07	20/3/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Team to discuss contact procedures for 'out of hours' work. 	All staff	20/3/07	20/3/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff to report instances of abuse so that managers can discuss with them and offer support. 	Manager to ensure this happens	20/3/07	20/3/07
Lone working Visiting hazardous premises	Staff risk injury or ill health when visiting premises that are in poor repair or contain hazardous substances, eg houses with poor electrics or sites that may have asbestos.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ When taking an enquiry, staff ask about the condition of premises, eg boiler/electrics, fall hazards etc. If hazardous conditions are identified, staff discuss with manager before visit. ■ Staff know not to take risks, eg not to try to restore electricity or gas supply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At next team meeting, staff to be reminded of the hazards of some premises and that they are not to take risks. 	Manager	20/3/07	20/3/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Any incidents to be discussed at team meetings to see if lessons can be learnt. 	Manager to remind staff, who are then to take action as needed.	20/3/07	20/3/07
Arranging services such as cleaning or maintenance at landlords' premises	Workers carrying out these services may suffer injury or ill health doing that work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff ensure that worker contracted to do the job is competent to do so. ■ Contractor required to tell staff how they will do the job safely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None. 			

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Manual handling eg deliveries of heavy items such as PCs or handling bulk mailings.	Staff may suffer injuries such as strains or bruising from handling heavy/bulky objects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Computers are only moved by supplier, as per contract. ■ No heavy stock on top shelves. ■ 'For Sale' signs are put up/removed by a contractor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Talk to the contractor to make sure that, along with their staff, they are handling the signs safely. 	Manager to speak to the contractor.	20/3/07	20/3/07
Slips, trips and falls	Staff and customers may be injured if they trip over objects or slip on spillages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Good housekeeping in customer areas. ■ Good lighting in all areas. ■ Trailing cables managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Better housekeeping in staff areas, eg clear up spills in kitchen promptly. 	All staff	20/3/07	19/3/07
Working at height eg pinning up property details or changing light bulbs.	Falls from any height can cause bruising and fractures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None at present, staff stand on a chair to pin up property details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No one is to stand on chairs to do jobs. A stepladder will be bought and staff shown how to use it safely. 	Manager to buy stepladder and to check it's kept in good repair.	3/3/07	19/3/07
Display screen equipment	Staff risk posture problems and pain, discomfort or injuries, eg to hands/arms, from overuse, improper use or from poorly designed workstations or work environments. Headaches or sore eyes can also occur, eg if the lighting is poor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff do not use computers for long and continuous periods. ■ DSE training and assessments of workstation from CD ROM carried out by all new starters early on in induction. Any actions to be carried out ASAP. ■ Reassessment to be carried out at any change to work feature, eg equipment, furniture or the work environment such as lighting. ■ Workstation and equipment set to ensure good posture and to avoid glare and reflections on the screen. ■ Shared workstations are assessed for all users. ■ Lighting and temperature suitably controlled. ■ Adjustable blinds at window to control natural light on screen. ■ Noise levels controlled. ■ Eye tests provided for those who need them, dutyholder to pay for basic spectacles specific for VDU use (or portion of cost in other cases). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Manager to ensure that any actions arising from the self-assessments are followed up ASAP. 	Manager	20/3/07	20/3/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tell staff that they are to inform their manager of any pain they have that may be linked to computer use. 	Manager	20/3/07	20/3/07

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Contact with bleach and other cleaning chemicals	Staff cleaning the shop risk skin irritation or eye damage from direct contact with bleach and other cleaning products. Vapour may cause breathing problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Long-handled mops and brushes, and strong rubber gloves, provided and used. ■ Staff read and follow instructions on the bottle when using bleach, toilet cleaner etc. ■ Staff wash rubber gloves before removing them carefully and storing them in a clean place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Where possible, replace 'irritant' chemicals with milder alternatives. 	Office administrator to try to get alternative to bleach that is not 'irritant'.	20/3/07	20/3/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff reminded to check for dry, red or itchy skin on their hands. 	Manager	20/3/07	20/3/07
Electrical	Staff could get electrical shocks or burns from using faulty electrical equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained to spot and report any defective plugs, discoloured sockets or damaged cable. ■ Staff know where fuse box is and how to safely switch off electricity in an emergency. ■ Access to fuse box kept clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Electrician to do a safety check of office electrics every five years. 	Office administrator	20/3/07	20/3/07
Fire	If trapped, staff could suffer from smoke inhalation/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"> ■ None. 			

Assessment review date: 1/3/08