Understanding Construction Risk Assessment

A basic guide
Understanding risk assessments

You, as the employer, are the one who stands between your workers and an accident!

- Look at what can hurt you or your workers;
- Decide what you are going to do;
- Write down what you are going to do;
- Tell your workers;
- Do it!
A short guide to risk assessments

The following pages include examples of dangerous situations on site and how you can manage similar situations to protect the health and safety of your employees.

Undertaking risk assessments is not difficult! In essence it requires you to look at your workplace and identify where people can be harmed. Then you need to do something to prevent that harm from happening. Take these simple steps providing a safer workplace for you; your employees; and other people close by.

1. Start by looking at “hazards” that are at your site. A hazard is simply anything that can cause harm to you or your employees.
   “Where can people come to harm?”

2. Next look at the level of risk. Some hazards will be high risk, e.g. working at height. Other hazards will be a lower risk, because the harm may be less severe.
   “What is the chance people will be harmed and how serious could the injury be?”

3. Decide what you are going to do to make the site safer for you; your employees and other people around you.
   “Ladder bay is there, use it!”

Then tell your employees!

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES!
Guided example: Blocklaying at first floor level

1. How can I be hurt? (e.g. hazards)
2. Can I access work safely?
3. Look at the consequences?
4. Make it safe!
5. Simple steps that you can follow!

- Look at your workplace, what can harm me or other workers on site.
- As an employer, you should ask yourself:
  - “Can I get to my workplace safely?”
  - “Can I work there safely?”
  - “What is the level of risk?”
  - “Who is exposed to the hazards?”
  - “What can I do to make it safer for me and others around me?”
- Keep the workplace clean and safe!

Start here
How can I be hurt? (e.g. hazards)

Look at the consequences?

Can I access work safely?

Make it safe!

Look - Act!

Different trades will be undertaking different construction activities on site.

As an employer, you must look at the tasks that your employees are carrying out and work out what the level of risk is to their safety.

This is part of the risk assessment process.

Here we are looking at steel erection, which is a high risk activity.

You must act to minimise the risks.
Guided example: Hand injuries

1. How can I be hurt? (eg hazards)
2. Look at the consequences?
3. Protection
4. Preventing injury

Typically 15% of non-fatal injuries in the construction sector involve injuries to the fingers. A further 8% of non-fatal injuries involve injuries to the hand.

You need to consider all levels of risk of harm; not just the high risk activities. Non-fatal injuries can have a lifelong debilitating effect - protect your employees!
Guided example: Driving a site dumper

1. How can I be hurt? (e.g. hazards)
2. Can I operate it safely?
3. Look at the consequences?
4. Make it safe!
5. Simple steps that you can follow!

- Read the instructions for the particular dumper you have;
- Drive within safe limits across sloped ground/banks;
- Check tyres and brakes;
- Always use the seat belt when roll over protection systems (ROPS) are fitted. Check that ROPS is certified and has CE Marking plate attached;
- Check that nobody is at risk of injury before moving off, particularly in the area obscured by the skip when going forward, and behind the vehicle when reversing;
Guided example: Using a quick hitch device

1. How can I be hurt? (e.g. hazards)

2. Can I operate it safely?

3. Look at the consequences?

4. Make it safe!

5. Quick and Easy!

If you are operating a machine (e.g. a 360° excavator) then you are responsible for the safe use of the machine, including the correct use of the quick hitch.

Make sure that the safety pin is fully inserted into the quick hitch. The attachment must be properly attached before you use it. Always check!

Never swing the attachment over other workers or allow them to work directly under the attachment.
The first thing to think about when doing a risk assessment is “How likely is it that someone can be harmed by this hazard?”

The likelihood of someone being harmed varies depending on the environment, the work activities and how often someone is going to be exposed to the hazard.

Using your experience and knowledge, you should be able to work out the likelihood quickly and easily.
Risk assessment: What is “consequence”?

The next issue to consider is the consequence (or severity) of the hazard; “How serious could the injury be?”

The severity can be influenced by the environment and the provision of a safe place of work and a safe system of work.

Using your experience and knowledge, you should be able to work out the severity quickly and easily.

You must put appropriate control measures in place, for all levels of risk, including low risk.
Controlling the risks: SSWP can help you

We have looked at three examples where it has gone wrong on construction sites. As an employer, you need to make sure it does not go wrong on your site. To help you, the Health and Safety Authority has produced the Safe System of Work Plans (SSWP). The primary objective of the SSWP is to identify the major hazards associated with your work activities and to ensure that appropriate controls are in place before work commences. The SSWP is a three-part process:

- Part 1: Planning the activity;
- Part 2: Hazard Identification, and Control Identification;
- Part 3: Sign off.

There are currently six SSWP Construction Forms available, including forms for House Building; Ground Works; Demolition; Civil Engineering; New Commercial Building; and Working on Roads.

Where it went wrong
You must carry out risk assessments, as part of your Safety Statement. Write these down and show them to your employees.

**Here are the three key components of a risk assessment.**

1. Take a good look at the construction site and the work that you are doing there. What you are looking for are the situations where people can be harmed (e.g. hazards). This can include people other than your employees. Look at how you get to your work area on site, is there safe access? Look at how you carry out the work, how can you be harmed?

2. When you know each of the hazards that are there on site, you need to assess the level of risk that you and your employees are exposed to. This is a simple step to take, just think about how likely it is that you could be harmed by each hazard and then how seriously you could be hurt. This will help you to rank the hazards. Some will be high risk, others medium risk or low risk hazards.

3. At this stage you should have a written list of hazards and the level of risk for each of these. You now need to decide what you are going to do about each hazard. Talk to your employees about the hazards. Write down the control measures and show these to your employees. Using the SSWP that is best suited to your work, will help you carry out risk assessments.
Working to create a National Culture of Excellence in Workplace Safety, Health and Welfare for Ireland

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY

Tel. 1890 289 389

International Callers 00353 1 6147000
Fax. (01) 6147020

www.hsa.ie