

Risk assessment for event organisers

Misconceptions

- Risk assessments only need to be done for large events;
- Risk assessments only need to be done by professional event organisers;
- Risk assessments are complicated;
- I don't understand risk assessments;
- I don't have to worry about risk assessments.

What is a risk assessment?

The purpose of risk assessment is to identify hazards which could cause harm, assess the risks which may arise from those hazards and decide on suitable measures to eliminate, or control, the risks. Significant findings of the risk assessment must be recorded if five or more people are employed. A risk assessment for the build-up, event and breakdown, can only be carried out once information has been received from the contractors, other companies and self employed people who will be working on site. It will also be necessary to visit the site or venues to identify specific hazards.

Why do events need a risk assessment?

- As an event organiser, you have a responsibility to the public to ensure that your event is run in a safe and appropriate manner;
- A risk assessment ensures that you have thought through the safety implications of the activity or event and taken all possible steps to reduce risks, where appropriate;
- A risk assessment does not guarantee that nothing will go wrong, but acting on its findings will significantly reduce the chance of problems occurring;
- If anything does go wrong, a risk assessment will show that you have done your best to predict and remove any risks. For anyone facing a claim or prosecution

relating to health and safety, the difference between having and not having a written risk assessment may be significant.

Don't panic

As an event organiser you almost certainly conduct risk assessments already, whether you know it or not!

Key Points:

- Ensure that one person is responsible for health and safety, but that everyone is aware
- Once written, make sure that all staff and volunteers are briefed on the health and safety plan and risk assessment
- Risk assessments are a logical process – ask the question "what if....?" Don't make it complicated - just take the time to think through the entire event and ensure that you have all the elements covered.

5 steps to writing a risk assessment

A simple risk assessment has 5 parts.

Step 1	Identify hazards associated with activities contributing to the event, where the activities are carried out and how the activities are to be undertaken.
Step 2	Identify those people who may be harmed, and how.
Step 3	Identify existing precautions eg venue design, operational procedures or existing 'safe systems of work'.
Step 4	Evaluate the risks.
Step 5	Decide what further actions may also be required, eg improvement in venue design, safe systems of work etc.

Passionate about events

north east
england

Risk assessment for event organisers

NB The information above is not intended as an exhaustive or authoritative guide, and should be read in conjunction with relevant HSE documentation as described at the end of this document.

Hazards identified

Think about what could go wrong and write them down. Don't worry about how it sounds.

- a 'hazard' is anything which has the potential to cause harm to people;
- a 'risk' is the likelihood of the harm from a hazard being realised and the extent of it.

Although the risk assessment examples in this Information Sheet are formally written, an informal risk assessment is quite acceptable: for example: ***The marquees might catch fire!***

The important thing is **that you do one!**

Hazard severity

If it happens how bad would it be?

- not that bad? ('Low')
- pretty bad? ('Medium') or
- very bad? ('High').

Give an indication of severity. For ***marquees might catch fire***, the hazard severity would be: **High**.

Likelihood of occurrence

How likely is it to happen? An important note – what this actually means here is 'How likely is it to happen if you don't take any actions to reduce the risk beyond the controls which are already in place'. Use the same scale of measurement as you used for 'Hazard severity' above.

For the marquee example, the likelihood of occurrence would be: **Low**.

Residual risk rating

Using the same scale of measurement again, the residual risk rating is a representation of the average of the hazard severity rating and the likelihood of occurrence rating.

An easy way to think about it is by using the following scores:

Low = 1; Medium = 2; High = 3

A combined rating is the lower score plus one half

eg Low/Medium = 1.5; Medium/High = 2.5

To work out the average add the scores of the hazard severity rating and the likelihood of occurrence rating and divide by two. Round all results up to always provide you with the worst case scenario.

The residual risk rating allows you to see, at a glance, the combination of the hazard severity and the likelihood of occurrence.

To work through an example enter information in the Risk Assessment Template

Control measures required

What action can you take to remove the risk or reduce it to an acceptable level? Most of the time there will be a simple and common sense solution to the problem. You need to identify it and ensure that it is carried out every time that risk is present.

What we actually mean here is what realistic action can you take to reduce the risk. For any risk there may be a variety of solutions that may be put in place to contain it. You should select the most appropriate solution bearing in mind the residual risk rating and the event specifics, including manpower and financial considerations.

Passionate about events

north east
england

Risk assessment for event organisers

Example:

A trailing power cable from a P.A. unit to a performance area presents a trip hazard to the public. For a small event with a low attendance, the hazard might carry a residual rating of low. Solutions such as secure in-house taping or matting might be sufficient for such events. For a large event with a significant attendance and where crowd disturbance has been identified as a possibility, the hazard might carry a residual risk rating of high. An appropriate solution would be to provide a secure and certified structure to carry the cable overhead. In-house taping or matting would not be an appropriate solution in such cases.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is it within my power / budget / capabilities to do that will reduce the risk?
- Will taking this action eliminate the risk or reduce it to an acceptable level?

If the answer to the second question is 'no' and you cannot identify an appropriate solution that lies within your power / budget / capabilities then you should look at removing the risk area entirely from your event, or changing it in such a way that you will be able to provide a solution that eliminates, or sufficiently reduces, the risk.

Your objective is to remove the risk entirely or to reduce it to an acceptable level.

Further information:

5 steps to risk assessment

Further information on constructing risk assessments is available free of charge from the Health and Safety Executive:

Order code: 0717615804

HSE books

PO Box 1999

Sudbury

Suffolk

CO10 2WA

T: 01787 881165

hsebooks@prolog.uk.com

<http://www.hsebooks.co.uk>

Health and Safety issues

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) produces a wide range of information and resources. Contact them, as above, for further details or a catalogue of publications. They also run an information line for queries: Tel: 08701 545 500.

Once you have read **5 steps to risk assessment** you will be able to start writing your own risk assessment. Try it!

Also refer to the **HSE Event Safety Guide**
ISBN 0-7176-2453-6

Passionate about events

north east
england