

# N·A·Re·S

National Association of Re-enactment Societies

## Guidance note - a basic guide to risk assessments

### Overview

It is recommended that every group seeks legal advice. The Health & Safety Executive council for the government have stated that we are bound by law to fill in a risk assessment form. Below are the recommendations for charity and volunteer workers. We recommend that you safeguard yourselves by taking note of these guidelines.

### Risk Assessment

Employers and the self-employed have a legal duty under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1992, to assess the risks to the health and safety of their employees and others, including voluntary workers. This risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people. It then helps you to decide whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm (remember 'risk' is the chance, big or small, of harm actually being done).

### Assessing the Risks

HSE recommends a five step approach to risk assessment:

#### **Step 1 - Look For The Hazards**

'Hazard' means anything that can cause harm (e.g. chemicals and other hazardous substances, electricity, working from ladders). Look at all your work activities, including non-routine tasks. Look at what ACTUALLY happens rather than what SHOULD happen.

#### **Step 2 - Decide Who Might Be Harmed, And How**

For example there are employees, voluntary workers, members of the public. Think about how people may be at risk - does their work involve manual handling, visiting people in their home, working with the public?

#### **Step 3 - For Each Hazard, Evaluate The Chance, Big Or Small, Of Harm Actually Being Done And Decide Whether Existing Precautions Are Adequate Or More Should Be Done.**

For example, for each hazard, consider what would be the worst result? Would it be a broken finger or someone being killed? How likely is it to happen? If you consider more needs to be done to control the risk, ask

yourself if you can avoid the hazard by doing the job in a different way. If not, you need to think about controlling the hazard more effectively. For example, choose the most important things to tackle first; work with your employees and voluntary workers to solve problems and agree precautions; don't forget that new training and information could be needed.

Remember, even after all precautions have been taken, some risk will often remain. The important things you need to decide are whether the hazard is significant, and whether you have controlled it by satisfactory precautions so that the risk is as small as possible. You need to check this when you assess the risk.

#### **Step 4 - Record The Significant Findings Of Your Risk Assessment, E.g. The Main Risks And The Measures You Have Taken To Deal With Them.**

A 'significant' hazard has the potential to cause serious harm. You can keep paper or electronic records; it's up to you, but make sure your records are easily accessible. Remember, you only need to record your significant findings. These would include the hazards, existing control measures, and the people who may be affected.

#### **Step 5 - Review Your Assessment From Time To Time, And Revise If Necessary.**

Remember that things change; you might take on new work. Rules get broken and people don't always do as they've been told. The only way to find out about changes like these is by checking. Don't wait until things have gone wrong. Check that the hazards are the same and that the precautions are adequate.

You can do the risk assessment yourself. If you work in a larger organization, you could ask a safety officer, safety representative or responsible employee to help you. If you are not confident, your local environmental health officer or local HSE inspector can advise you. But remember - you are responsible for seeing that the risk assessment is done and is adequate.

### **Information, Instruction And Training**

Health and safety law requires you to provide information, instruction and training for your employees. HSE considers it good practice for a volunteer user to provide the same level of health and safety information, instruction and training as they would in an employer/employee relationship. To help you in your approach to health and safety, this section sets out, in five easy steps, what you need to do. Information means providing factual material to people about risks and health and safety measures.

#### **Step 1 - Decide Who Needs Information**

This would include your employees, your voluntary workers, temporary staff, people visiting your premises etc.

#### **Step 2 - Decide What Information Needs To Be Covered**

This would include health and safety risks, precautions for preventing these

risks or protecting against them, how to use work equipment, how to work with members of the public (e.g. how to diffuse conflict or aggression).

### **Step 3 - Decide When Information Is Needed**

Usually, the answer is: in enough time for it to be acted on. So think about what your employees and voluntary workers need when they start work or perform a job for the first time.

### **Step 4 - Decide How You Are Going To Provide The Information**

Think about the amount of information, who needs it and when. You can provide it:

- i) by telling people what they need to know;
- ii) in written form;
- iii) by letting people use information held on computer.

Make sure the information is easy to understand. Make sure that the people receiving it know why they are getting it and what they're expected to do with it.

### **Step 5 - Check That The Information Has Been Effective**

Has everyone understood? Has the information been correctly acted on?

## **Recommendations**

It is highly recommended that each group or organization acquire a copy of 'Charity and Volunteer Workers' from the Health & Safety Executive; the book number is HSG192 and is priced at £12.

*NAReS guidance notes are based on what is believed to be current good practice. They are not intended to be exhaustive in their content and are open to revision.*

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