

Guidance on Completing Risk Assessments

1. Introduction

The following guidance is aimed at assisting users / volunteers / leaders carry out general risk assessments within CCC.

A risk assessment is an important step in protecting the health and safety of staff, users and visitors, as well as being a requirement of the law. It helps you focus on the risks that really matter in carrying out the event that you are holding / activity you are leading, the ones with the potential to cause real harm. In many instances, straightforward measures can readily control risks, for example ensuring spillages are cleaned up promptly so people do not slip.

The law does not expect all risk to be eliminated, but we are required to protect people in the various activities undertaken at CCC as far as 'reasonably practicable'. This guidance will hopefully assist you in how to achieve that with a minimum of fuss.

This is not the only way to carry out a risk assessment, there are other methods that will work equally well. However, this method is straightforward, easy to follow and its use is strongly recommended.

2. What is risk assessment?

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your activity / event, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. Volunteers and others have a right to be protected from harm caused by a failure to take reasonable control measures.

The Facilities Management Team at CCC conduct their own risk assessments, associated with general risks within the facilities.

There is now a requirement for all those booking the premises / leading various activities to carry out their own Risk Assessment specifically associated with the event / group / activity being undertaken.

3. How to assess general risks in the workplace

Follow the five steps in this guidance:

STEP 1	Identify the Hazards
STEP 2	Decide who might be harmed and how
STEP 3	Evaluate the risks and decide appropriate precautions
STEP 4	Record your findings and decide upon precautions
STEP 5	Review your assessment and update if necessary

Do not overcomplicate the process. Many risks are well known and the necessary control measures are easy to apply. It is probably already known, for example, whether employees or volunteers work alone, use step ladders or where people are most likely to slip or trip. If so, checks should be made to ensure that reasonable precautions to avoid injury have been taken.

If you are confident you understand what is involved, you can do the assessment yourself. You don't have to be a health and safety expert. If you require assistance to complete the Risk Assessment, please contact the Facilities Management Team. In all cases, you should make sure that you involve other volunteers, and leaders of your group / event in the process. They will have useful information about how the work is done, that will make your assessment of the risk more thorough and effective.

When thinking about a risk assessment, remember:

- a hazard is anything that may cause harm, such as electricity, working from ladders, a trailing cable on the floor etc;
- the risk is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

STEP 1 Identify the Hazards

Firstly you need to work out how people could be harmed. When you work in a place every day, it is easy to overlook some hazards, so here are some tips to help you identify the ones that matter:

- Walk around your event-space and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm.
- Ask other volunteers or leaders what they think. They may have noticed problems that are not immediately obvious to you.
- Check manufacturers instructions for equipment as they can be very helpful in spelling out the hazards and putting them in their true perspective.
- Have a look back at your accident records, these often help to identify the less obvious hazards.
- Remember to think about long-term hazards to health, (e.g. repetitive strain injuries), as well as safety hazards.

STEP 2 Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed. It will help identify the best way of managing the risk. That doesn't mean listing everyone by name, but rather identifying groups of people (e.g. 'people working in the kitchen' or 'passersby').

In each case, identify how they might be harmed, i.e. what type of injury or ill health might occur. For example, 'Volunteers may suffer back injuries from repeated lifting of boxes'.

Remember:

- some workers have particular requirements, e.g. new and young workers, new or expectant mothers and people with disabilities may be particularly at risk.

Extra thought will be needed for some hazards;

- cleaners, visitors, contractors, maintenance workers etc, who may not be in the facilities all the time;
- members of the public, if they could be hurt by your activities;
- if you share your event-space, you will need to think about how your event affects others present, as well as how their event affects your activity – talk to them; and,

- ask your leaders / volunteers if they can think of anyone you may have missed.

STEP 3 Evaluate the risks and decide appropriate precautions

Having spotted the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about them. The law requires you to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. You can work this out for yourself, but the easiest way is to compare or "benchmark" what you are doing, with good practice.

In the first instance, look at what you're already doing, think about what controls you have in place and how the event / activity is organised. Then compare this with the good practice and see if there's more you should be doing to bring yourself up to standard. In asking yourself this, consider:

- Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
- If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

When controlling risks, apply the principles below, if possible in the following order:

- try a less risky option
- prevent access to the hazard
- organise the event / activity to reduce exposure to the hazard
- issue personal protective equipment

Involve others, so that you can be sure that what you propose to do will work in practice and won't introduce any new hazards.

STEP 4 Record your findings and decide upon precautions

Putting the results of your risk assessment into practice, will make a difference when looking after staff / leaders, volunteers and visitors. Writing down the results of your risk assessment, and sharing them, encourages you to do this.

The attached generic risk assessment form is an acceptable format for recording the risks and the associated controls.

Risk assessments should be accessible to anyone wishing to see them and to those that are liable to be affected. The conclusions of the risk assessment and controls must be clearly communicated to those at risk.

When writing down your results, keep it simple. For example, 'Tripping over rubbish; bins provided, staff instructed, weekly housekeeping checks'.

Risk assessments are not expected to be perfect, but they must be suitable and sufficient. You need to be able to show that:

- a proper check was made;
- those affected were consulted;
- significant hazards have been considered, taking into account the number of people who could be involved;
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low; and,
- staff / leaders or other volunteers were involved in the process.

If you find that there are quite a lot of improvements that you could make, big and small, don't try to do everything at once. Make a plan of action to deal with the most important things first.

A good plan of action often includes a mixture of different things such as:

- a few low cost or easy improvements that can be done quickly, perhaps as a temporary solution until more reliable controls are in place;
- long-term solutions to those risks most likely to cause accidents or ill health;
- long-term solutions to those risks with the worst potential consequences;
- arrangements for training other people on the main risks that remain and how they are to be controlled;
- regular checks to make sure that the control measures stay in place; and,
- clear responsibilities – who will lead on what action, and by when.
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Remember, prioritise and tackle the most important things first. As you complete each action, tick it off your plan.

STEP 5 Review your assessment and update if necessary

Few event-spaces stay the same. Sooner or later, you may bring in new equipment, and procedures that could lead to new hazards. It makes sense, therefore, to review what you are doing on an ongoing basis. Every year or so formally review where you are, to make sure you are still improving, or at least not sliding back.

Look at your risk assessment again. Have there been any changes? Are there improvements you still need to make? Have leaders or volunteers spotted an issue? Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses? Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.

When you are busy, it's all too easy to forget about reviewing your risk assessment, until something has gone wrong and it's too late. Why not set a review date for this risk assessment now? Write it down and note it in your diary as an annual event.

During the year, if there is a significant change, don't wait. Check your risk assessment and, where necessary, amend it. If possible, it is best to think about the risk assessment when you're planning your change – that way you leave yourself more flexibility.

4. Getting help

A model generic risk assessment form and guidance note on how to fill it out, is attached. It can be copied, printed off and adapted to your own needs if necessary. However, its use is not compulsory.

If you require assistance, please contact the Facilities Management Team. Please remember, the Facilities Management Team have considered the risks present in the facilities. The Risks that you are being asked to identify are the specific risks associated with your event / group.

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Notes to accompany the generic Risk Assessment Form

The use of this standard format is recommended by the Facilities Management Team. It is strongly recommended that it be used for all new assessments, and when existing assessments are being substantially revised. However, its use is not compulsory.

¹ **Date:** Insert the date that the assessment form is completed. The assessment must be valid on that day, and subsequent days, unless circumstances change and amendments are necessary.

² **Assessed by:** Insert the name and signature of the assessor. Assessments should be carried out by a competent person. A competent person is someone with sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities to enable them to properly carry out the task.

³ **Location:** insert details of the exact location, i.e. Room location

⁴ **Assessment Reference No:** use this to insert any local tracking references used by the department or support service.

⁵ **Hazard:** for each activity, list the hazards. Remember to look at hazards that are not immediately obvious.

⁶ **Who might be harmed and how:** insert everyone who might be affected by the activity and specify those particularly at risk. Remember those who are not immediately involved in the task / activity / event. Remember also that the risks for different tasks / activities / events will vary. eg Vulnerable groups could include someone who is pregnant, or people with known disabilities or health conditions. (This is not a definitive list and may be added to). For each task / activity / event, describe how harm might come about, e.g. an obstruction or wet patch on an exit route is a hazard that might cause a trip and fall; use of electrical equipment might give rise to a risk of electric shock.

⁷ **What are we already doing?** : list all measures that already mitigate the risk. Many of these will have been implemented for other reasons, but should nevertheless be recognised as means of controlling risk.

⁸ **Risk:** for each activity, list the risks identified. Remember to look at hazards that are not immediately obvious.

⁹ **Risk Rating** : the simplest form of risk assessment is to rate the remaining risk as high, medium or low, depending on how likely the activity is to cause harm and how serious that harm might be.

The risk is **LOW** - if it is most unlikely that harm would arise under the controlled conditions listed, and even if exposure occurred, the injury would be relatively slight.

The risk is **MEDIUM** - if it is more likely that harm might actually occur and the outcome could be more serious (e.g. some time off work, or a minor physical injury).

The risk is **HIGH** - if injury is likely to arise (e.g. there have been previous incidents, the situation looks like an accident waiting to happen) and that injury might be serious (broken bones, a trip to the hospital, loss of consciousness), or even a fatality.

¹⁰ **Further Action Required.** Include details of any actions necessary in order to meet the requirements of the information in Section 8 'What are the risks identified'.

¹¹ **Review date:** insert details of when the assessment will be reviewed as a matter of routine. This might be in 1 month, 1 year's time, or longer period if risks are known to be stable. Note that any assessment must be reviewed if there are any significant changes – to the activity, the vicinity, the people exposed to the risk, etc

¹² **Action By.** Identify someone who will be responsible for ensuring the action is taken and the date by which this should occur.

¹³ **Completed:** this stage of assessment is often overlooked, but is probably the most important. It is important that the risk is reviewed, and results are recorded.