



Scout County of Avon
Risk Assessment Guide



Introduction

The Scout County of Avon has both a legal and moral duty to ensure the safety and health of its employees and members. This is required of us by Section 2(1) & 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and under common law

It is the policy of the Scout County of Avon to fulfil this duty by operating an integrated, structured and documented system of management control over all its operations. To achieve this aim requires an on-going series of risk management actions carried out at various levels of the organisation.

Risk assessment is at the heart of any successful risk management system. Our health and safety policy statement sets out the necessary arrangements in broad terms. This guidance aims to help all employees and leaders to implement the arrangements in respect of their responsibilities. You should note that this guidance bases its standards directly on published HSE guidance relevant to risk assessment. If you feel that you are unable to assess the risks involved adequately, help is available from the County safety Coordinator.

This guidance is designed to fulfil three purposes:

1. To give you guidance on the principles of health and safety risk assessments.
2. To tell you how the Scout County of Avon expects the principles to be applied in compliance with its overall strategy for risk assessment
3. To help you to prioritise and target risk control efforts efficiently and effectively.

When carrying out risk assessment it is essential that there is consultation with those who actually carry out the activity or task or who have particular expertise in that area of work. This is often the quickest and surest way to identify in detail what really happens. They will know what steps are followed, whether any short cuts are used, what action is taken to overcome difficulties that arise from time-to-time and what actual precautions are in use. In addition other sources of good practise should be sought out such as guidance published by the H.S.E., and by the Scout Association. Both of these are available from the internet or by post.

The risk assessment process itself should be considered as a series of steps in which each step is an opportunity to consider in depth a particular aspect of the risk being evaluated, in order to bring more into focus the final decision about controlling (managing) the risk.

It is therefore important to collect comprehensive up-to-date information. The overall risk assessment process needs to be organised in such a way as to facilitate this, and to share information about risks and the legal standards or standards of good practice which eliminate or reduce the risks.

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The use of consistent methods, terminology and documentation for this process will greatly improve the management of such information.

Once the assessment has been completed, there are three uses for the output.

1. **Action** - Where management/Leader action is required - a plan should be drawn up of what is required and by whom. Timescales should be allocated to these tasks on a risk-prioritised basis.
2. **Procedures** - Any procedures, rules or other material produced for the instruction of employees/leaders and those participating in the task or area assessed should be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with the precautions identified, and updated as necessary.
3. **Communication** - It is vital that all persons carrying out the task/activity are aware of the hazards identified and the resulting precautionary measures specified.

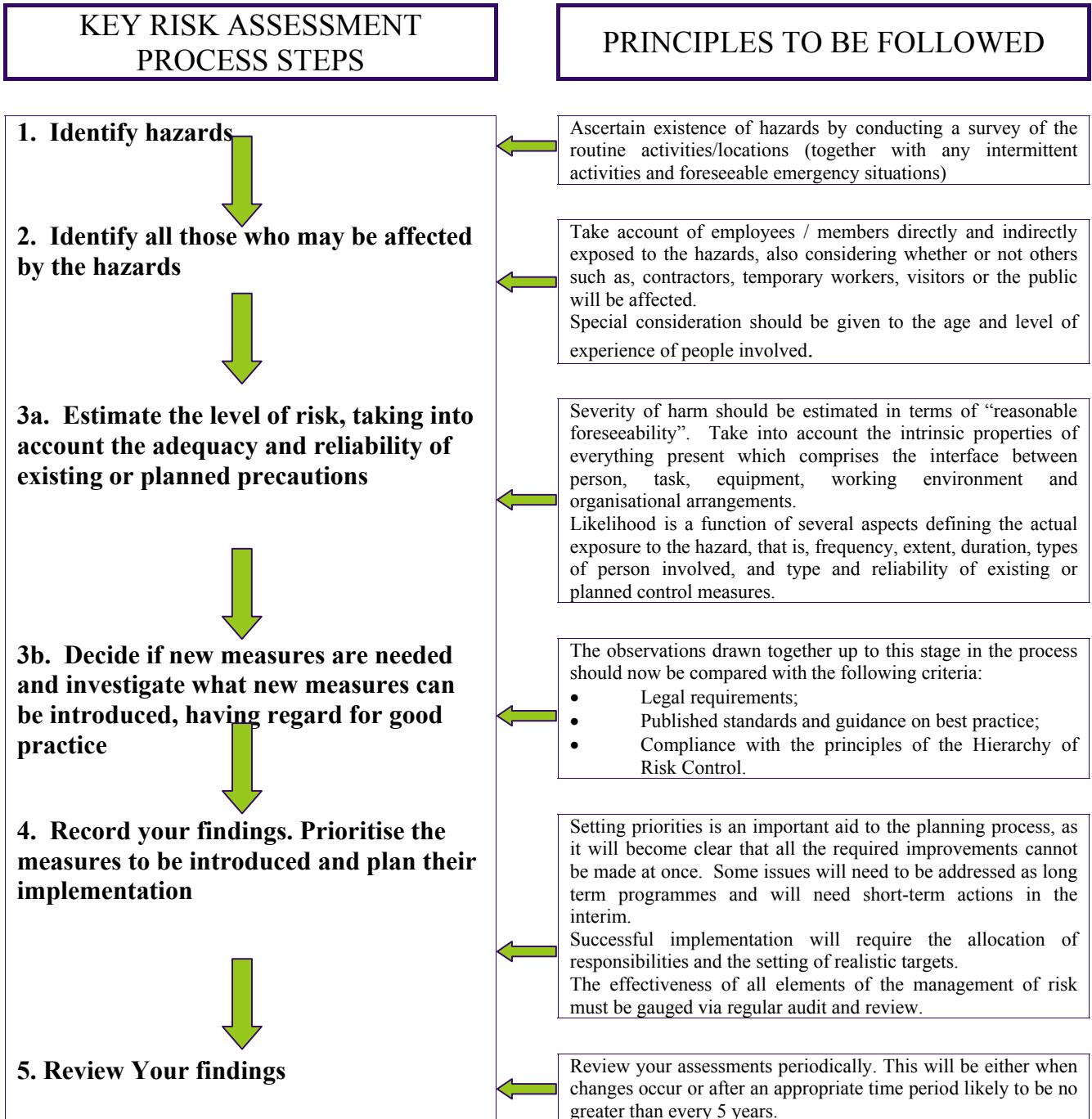
These assessments must be recorded and filed away for future reference. This should be done in a way that makes them accessible to those who may need to use them. They should be updated when there is a substantial change in the underlying factors, such as equipment changes, people changes, etc. They should be reviewed at an appropriate interval, depending on the nature of the risk, but not less than every five years.

All employees, leaders and other users should be aware of, and comply with, assessments relevant to the tasks they carry out, either directly or through the related procedures. They should also be in no doubt that, important as these assessments are in minimising the risks of any particular task, there is no substitute for taking care, being vigilant for additional and unusual hazards, and bringing these to the attention of their managers and leaders.

Figure 1 summarises the principles to be adopted in order to apply this step-by-step approach in a consistent manner, and pages 4 to 8 describe the principles in more detail. Therefore you may find it more helpful to read the whole document, and look at some worked examples before starting to write your own assessments.

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FIGURE 1



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The Principles of Risk Assessment

The Risk Assessment System adopted by the Scout County of Avon is a straightforward method of assessing and recording a wide range of risks and involves five main steps:

1. The identification of hazards;
2. The identification of all those who may be affected by the hazards;
- 3a. An estimation of the level of risk, taking into account the adequacy and reliability of existing or planned risk control measures;
- 3b. Deciding if new risk control measures are needed and investigation as to what new measures can be introduced, having regard for good practice;
4. Recording and prioritisation of the measures to be introduced and planned implementation.
5. Review

These five key steps lead to an accurate estimate and hence, a reliable, valid safety management decision. Risk assessment should be seen as critical element of the overall strategy to manage H&S risks, enabling leaders to take “reasonably practical” measures about “reasonably foreseeable” risks.

Applying the Five-step Assessment Process

The following guidance outlines how these questions can be answered in relation to each of the five key steps. Assessments can be carried out on tasks, locations or events. Each can use the same documentation and methodology, but will require expertise relevant to the type of assessment being carried out.

Step 1: Identify hazards

Identifying hazards is of a vital importance, because anything missed at this stage will not come under scrutiny during the later steps and serious risks could go uncontrolled. This should be approached by:

- a) Consulting with employees and/or other leaders in order to learn from their understanding of the hazards and their ill effects.
- b) Ascertain existence of hazards by conducting a survey of the routine work activities/locations (together with any intermittent activities and foreseeable emergency situations) which incorporates:
 - actual observations;
 - brainstorming exercises;
 - consideration of operating instructions, POR and reference materials, and any other source of knowledge and experience for the activity.

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c) Using systematic and wide-ranging hazard identification techniques to examine all aspects of the work in question. Information on what actually happens during the work activity needs to include any non-routine or intermittent aspects, together with foreseeable unplanned events and emergency interruptions. The following topics have proved to be common to many working situations and can be useful as a basis for hazard identification techniques, such as inspection checklists, team discussions, researching manuals and documentation, and reviews of accident histories:

- Work equipment
- Work practices
- Layout of workplace
- Environmental workplace factors
- Use of substances/materials
- Exposure to physical agents
- Exposure to biological agents
- Human performance factors

Refer to Appendix 2 for greater detail on these topics.

Step 2: Identify all those who may be affected by the hazards

This should be approached by:

- a) Reviewing the information gathered so far on the hazards in terms of how harm could occur to employees and other persons. Having selected an appropriate basis for structuring the assessment will mean that the main at-risk groups should be easily apparent.
- b) Referring to a checklist which highlights the main groups of persons affected. The following list would be suitable as a basis:

- Employees/leaders/members engaged in the activity/task.
- Employees/leaders/ members assisting with parts of the activity
- Employees/leaders/ members doing ancillary tasks
- Employees/leaders/ members engaged in maintenance work/support services
- Employees/leaders/ members in the vicinity not involved with the activity/task
- Contractors or temporary workers with any of the above roles
- Visitors including parents and siblings, passing third parties, etc.

The following may have special risks attached to them:

- Pregnant women and nursing mothers
- New recruits, seasonal or other inexperienced staff
- Disabled persons and persons with existing ill-health problems
- Employees/leaders/ members receiving medication

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Step 3a: Estimate the level of risk, taking into account the adequacy and reliability of existing or planned risk control measures.

- The process of estimation will be assisted by the use of a straightforward approach that brings together the two main elements of risk: Severity and likelihood.
- Figure 2 contains a suitable risk estimator matrix. The decisions required of Step 3a should be approached by:
 - a) Systematically examining the harmful effects of the hazards and the parts of the body affected and concluding whether the reasonably foreseeable outcome would be slight harm, harmful, or extremely harmful.
 - b) Considering the factors that determine the likelihood that harm will occur, that is:
 - Frequency and duration of exposure to the hazard – hours at a time, every day/week?
 - Number of persons exposed - individuals, teams, all employees?
 - Types of person and their knowledge/experience - appropriate skills, qualifications?
 - Complexity/Reliability of the risk control measure - practical, convenient, ease of maintenance?

and concluding the outcome in terms of whether the harm is unlikely, likely, or frequent.

Figure 2

RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

SEVERITY LIKELIHOOD	SLIGHT HARM 1 - superficial injuries, minor cuts and bruises	HARMFUL 2 - minor fractures, ill- health leading to minor disability	EXTREMELY HARMFUL 3 - multiple injuries, major fractures, fatalities
UNLIKELY 1 - hazard does not usually cause harm	LOW 1	LOW 2	MEDIUM 3
LIKELY 2 - harm will occur frequently	LOW 2	MEDIUM 4	HIGH 6
VERY LIKELY 3 - near certain that harm will occur	MEDIUM 3	HIGH 6	HIGH 9

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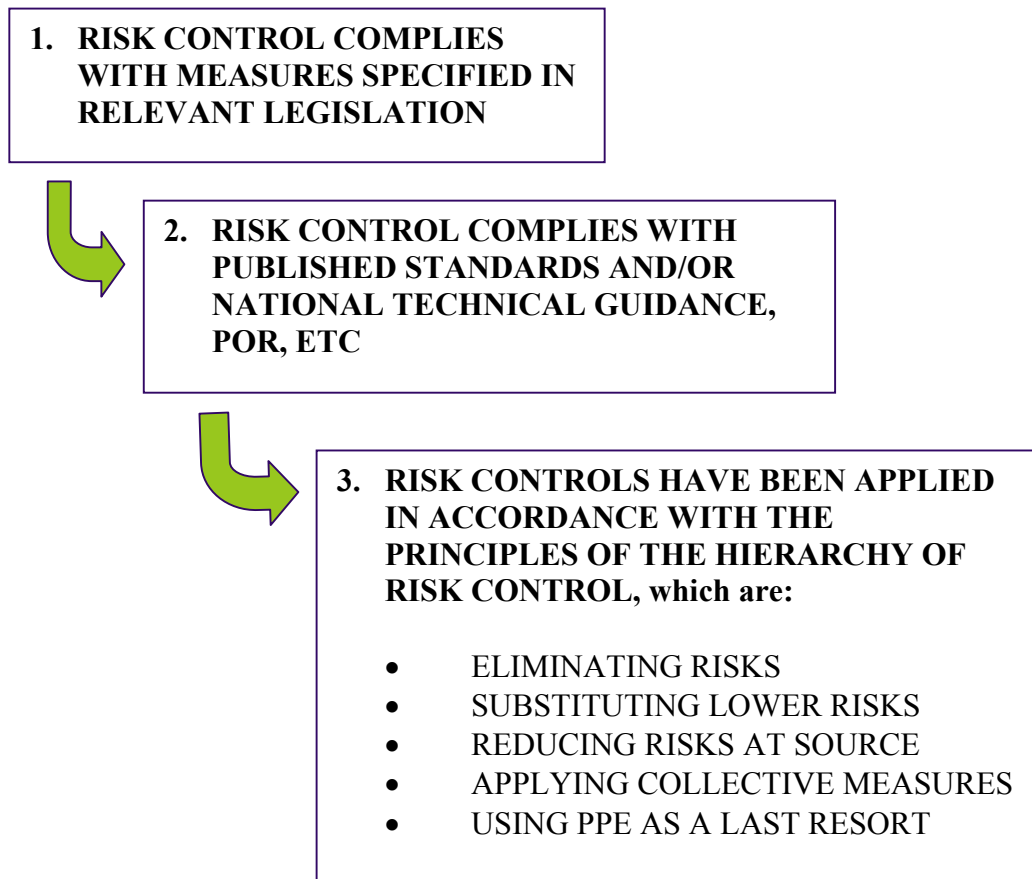
Step 3b: Decide if new risk control measures are needed and investigate what new measures can be introduced, having regard for good practice

The judgement about adequacy of risk control measures needs to be taken against three criteria listed in Figure 3. These can be applied by:

- a) Seeking to apply new risk control measures in a concerted effort to improve the level of protection afforded to employees/leaders/members and other persons who may be affected. Risk management considerations/control measures should be included in the early design and planning/purchasing stages of the management of tasks and activities.
- b) Seeking continually to re-examine relevant information about the availability and effectiveness of risk control measures, adapting to new methods and standards as time progresses.
- c) Avoiding short cuts and the use of materials the properties of which are not known or equipment the state of which is unknown.

Figure 3

RISK CONTROL CRITERIA



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Step 4: Prioritise the measures to be introduced and plan their implementation.

This should be approached by:

- a) Ensuring that risk assessment records contain options for reducing risks and a conclusion as to whether the efforts made to eliminate or reduce the risk are to be given a high, medium or low priority. This can be looked at in terms of:-
 - Can action be taken to prevent the hazard occurring?
 - Can action be taken to prevent injury occurring?
 - Can action be taken to reduce the seriousness of the harm?
 - Can action be taken to reduce the numbers of people at risk?
- b) Preparing action plans which specify who is to do what, by when, and with what result.
- c) Review the implemented of the control measures from time to time to ensure that they have all been implemented and maintained over time.

Step 5: Review risk assessment

This should be carried out following any changes to the way the task is carried out or facility operated. They will also need reviewing when an incident occurs to include any lessons learnt from the investigation.

In any case they must be reviewed periodically. This will vary depending on the nature of the task or facility. Some will require updating annually where factors are likely to change year on year. Where the situation is more stable they will require reviewing every three to five years.

Written risk assessments and any associated implementation plans and reviews should be stored for seven years after they are valid.

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APPENDIX 1: Glossary of terms

These definitions will help readers to understand the way in which the key terms are used throughout this guidance:-

RISK ASSESSMENT

The overall process of estimating the magnitude of risk and deciding whether or not the risk is tolerable or acceptable.

HAZARD

A source or a situation with the potential to cause harm in terms of human injury or ill-health, damage to property, damage to the environment, or a combination of these.

RISK

The likelihood that the harm from particular hazards is realised including the extent to which the risk covers the population affected and the consequences for them.

RISK CONTROL MEASURES

The preventative actions which are taken to eliminate or reduce the risk associated with a hazard.

REASONABLY PRACTICABLE

Means that the degree of risk in a particular work activity can be balanced against the time, trouble, cost and physical difficulty of taking measures to avoid the risk. If these are deemed grossly disproportionate to the risk then the measures under consideration need not be implemented. The greater the risk, the more likely it is for it to be reasonably practicable to go to very substantial time, trouble and expense to avoid/reduce it.

WORK

This includes not only work carried out by employees of Avon County Scout Council, but all activities and tasks carried under its jurisdiction.

PPE

Personal protective equipment such as wet weather gear, life jackets, boots, etc.

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Appendix 2: Hazard Checklist

Work equipment

- trapping
- entanglement
- impact
- crushing
- friction/abrasion
- electricity
- pressure systems
- fire/explosion

Exposure to physical agents

- noise
- vibration
- hot/cold substances
- sharps / needles
- lasers
- electromagnetic radiation

Exposure to biological agents

- micro-organisms
- allergens

Layout of workplace

- uneven surfaces
- slippery surfaces
- falls from heights
- falls into substances
- falling objects
- obstructions
- access to controls

Environmental workplace factors

- temperature
- lighting
- ventilation
- noise
- weather
- animals
- deep/fast flowing water
- confined spaces

Use of substances/materials

- inhalation
- skin contact
- ingestion
- asphyxiation
- sensitizers/allergens
- fire/explosion

Work practices

- awkward movements
- repetitive movements
- constrictions to posture
- working alone
- work near the public
- contact with the public

Human performance factors

- monotony
- distractions
- stress
- experience
- knowledge
- skill
- motivation
- organisation structure
- work schedule / programme
- rewards and benefits

