



## **CPA Safety Guidance**

# **5 Steps to Risk Assessment**

### **Introduction**

As an employer, or self-employed person, you are required by law to carry out a risk assessment of your work activities in your plant hire depots, workshops, offices and any other premises where work is carried out.

Risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of what could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

To help you carry out your assessment, HSE publish a free leaflet 5 steps to risk assessment giving practical guidance on how to assess risks and record the findings. This CPA Guidance is based on this and adapted for the situation in the plant hire industry.

Before starting risk assessment, take time to prepare. You should get hold of and read health and the safety publications that cover your work activities and give guidance on the hazards. The HSE, CPA, BSI, Department of Transport, and others produce such publications. Some of these are listed at the end of this guidance and the CPA can advise you on the relevant ones for your operations and where to obtain them.

Companies that supply you with equipment, chemicals etc for use at work have a legal obligation to supply you with health and safety information about their products.

Nobody knows your business better than you and the people who work for you. Use this knowledge and experience when carrying out the risk assessment.

Risk assessment is not meant to be a theoretical exercise, it must be backed up with a tour of the workplace to confirm what is actually there. You may want to do this by systematically going from work area to work area, identifying the hazards associated with equipment and activities in each. Another approach is to shadow employees to see what hazards they meet while going about their work.

You should always consider first whether you can get rid of the hazard altogether or replace it with something safer. Then, consider whether the control measures you have already taken are enough. In the vast majority of cases, it will be relatively straightforward for you to decide by comparing the controls you have put in place with the good practice set out in the published guidance that you have obtained. If you are uncertain what to do, have a word with your local HSE office, other plant hire companies or the manufacturers of your plant or equipment.

Under normal circumstances, your company is not responsible for conducting risk assessments on your customer's sites when you hire plant under the CPA Model Conditions of Hire. The management of those sites have overall responsibility for the health and safety of all persons that work there.

With non-operated plant hire, you are only required to provide the customer with the information that is necessary for their operators on site to use the plant safely.

With operated plant hire, the plant operator employed by your company who works on the customer's site, becomes the servant of your customer during the time of the hire. Neither he nor your company has overall responsibility for the risk assessment of the work that he undertakes. Similarly, when one of your plant mechanics goes on site to carry out maintenance or repairs on one of your machines, he is not responsible for the risk assessment.

This should not stop your employees from working closely with the management of the site. It is likely that the site will understand the hazards that are associated with these two examples. However, your employees should be aware that, if they spot any hazards which are beyond their control when they start their work, they should consult with the site management and ask them to take what actions seem necessary.

In some instances a plant hire company is best suited to take on some of the responsibility for the safety of an operation, such as the erection of a construction hoist or a tower crane. In the case of mobile cranes, all of the responsibility is often taken by the crane hire company by supplying the crane as part of a "contract lift." This involves the planning, risk assessment and safe execution of lifting operations, overseen by an "appointed person" employed by the hire company. This guidance does not attempt to provide guidance on these special situations.

### **The HSE's 5 Steps to Risk Assessment**

These are:

1. Look for the hazards.
2. Decide who might be harmed, and how.
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done.
4. Record your findings.
5. Review your assessment and revise it if necessary.

### **STEP 1- Look for the hazards**

Prepare a preliminary list identifying likely potential hazards and the issues to consider when deciding upon control measures. Then walk around your workplace and look afresh at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Ignore the trivial and concentrate on significant hazards which could result in serious harm or affect several people.

Make sure you talk to your employees, use their experience, listen to their concerns. The employees' safety representative, if there is one, will have a contribution to make. They may have noticed things which are not immediately obvious. Manufacturers' instructions or data sheets can also help you spot hazards and put risks in their true perspective. So can your accident book and ill-health records.

## **STEP 2 - Decide who might be harmed, and how**

Do not forget to consider:

- young workers, trainees and expectant mothers, etc who may be at particular risk;
- cleaners, visitors, maintenance workers, etc who may not be in the workplace all the time;
- members of the public, or people you share your workplace with, if there is a chance they could be hurt by any work activities.

## **STEP 3 - Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done**

You can now sit down and complete your assessment. Consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm. This will determine whether or not you need to do more to reduce the risk. Even after all precautions have been taken, some risk usually remains. What you have to decide for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low.

First, ask yourself whether you have done all the things that the law requires. For example, in your workshops, there are legal requirements on the prevention of access to dangerous parts of machinery. Then ask yourself whether generally accepted industry standards are in place. Your aim is to make all risks small by adding to your precautions as necessary.

If you find that something needs to be done, draw up an "action list" and give priority to any remaining risks which are high and/or those which could affect most people. In taking action ask yourself:

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

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

- try a less risky option;
- prevent access to the hazard (eg by guarding);
- organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard;
- issue personal protective equipment;
- provide welfare facilities (eg washing facilities for removal of contamination and first aid).

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents, or putting some non-slip material on slippery steps, are inexpensive precautions considering the risks.

Failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen.

If you share a work place, tell the other employers and self-employed people about any risks your work could cause them, and what precautions you are taking. Also, think about the risks to your own workforce from those who share your workplace.

More information about legal requirements and standards can be found in the HSE publications "An Introduction to Health and Safety", "Essentials of Health and Safety" and "Management of Health and Safety at Work, Approved Code of Practice".

#### **STEP 4 - Record your findings**

If you have fewer than five employees you do not need to write anything down, though it is useful to keep a written record of what you have done. But, if you employ five or more people, you must record the significant findings of your assessment. This means writing down the significant hazards and conclusions. Examples might be "Electrical installations: insulation and earthing checked and found sound" or "Fume from welding: local exhaust ventilation provided and regularly checked".

Risk assessments must be suitable and sufficient. You need to be able to show that:

- a proper check was made;
- you asked who might be affected;
- you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved;
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low.

The written record can help you if an HSE inspector asks what precautions you have taken, or if you become involved in any action for civil liability. It can also remind you to keep an eye on particular hazards and precautions. It also helps to show that you have done what the law requires. There is an example of a form at the end of this guide which you may find helpful, but you can design your own form if you prefer.

Refer to other documents, such as manuals, the arrangements in your health and safety policy statement, company rules, manufacturers' instructions, your health and safety procedures and your arrangements for general fire safety. These may already list hazards and precautions and you do not need to repeat it.

You must tell your employees about your findings.

#### **STEP 5 - Review your assessment and revise it if necessary**

Sooner or later you will bring in new machines, substances and procedures which could lead to new hazards. If there is any significant change, add to the assessment to take account of the new hazard. Do not amend your assessment for every trivial change or for each new job unless they introduces significant new hazards. In any case, it is good practice to review your assessment from time to time.

## RISK ASSESSMENT RECORD

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR:	ASSESSMENT UNDERTAKEN:	ASSESSMENT REVIEW:
Company Name:  Company Address:   Postcode:	(Date:)  Signed:  Date:	Date:

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
List significant hazards here:	List groups of people who are at risk from the significant hazards you have identified:	List existing controls or note where the information may be found. List risks which are not adequately controlled and the action needed:

**NOTE: You must tell your employees about your findings.**

## Further References

You will find most of what you need to know about standards and legal requirements in:

1. Essentials of health and safety at work, ISBN 0 7176 0716 X, 1995 - £5.95
2. Safe use of work equipment, L22, ISBN 0 7176 1626 6 - £8.00.
3. Safe use of lifting equipment, L113, ISBN 0 7176 1628 2 - £8.00
4. Health and safety in engineering workshops, HSG129, ISBN 0 7176 1717 3, £9.50.
5. Maintaining portable and transportable electrical equipment, HS(G)107, ISBN 0 7176 0715 1, £5
6. Managing vehicle safety at the workplace, INDG199, 1995 - FREE
7. Personal Protective Equipment at Work: Guidance on Regulations, L25, ISBN 0 7176 0415 2, 1992 - £5
8. Workplace transport safety, HSG 136, ISBN 0 7176 0935 9, 1995 - £7.50
9. Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, HSG161, ISBN 0 7176 1253 8 - £12.50.
10. Reducing Noise at Work, L108, ISBN 7176 1511 1.
11. Safety of Loads on Vehicles, ISBN 0 11 55066607, Dept of Transport, available from The Stationery Office, £8.99.
12. CPA Safety Instructions - leaflets for the operator/user of all small equipment and tools; obtainable from the CPA.
13. CPA Operator Safety Guides - booklets on the safe use of plant for crane, MEWPs and concrete pump operators; obtainable from the CPA.
14. CPA Best Practice Guides on inspection, thorough examination and maintenance of hoists, mobile cranes, MEWPs & transport platforms; obtainable from the CPA.

You might also find the following useful:

15. Management of health and safety at work: approved code of practice ISBN 0 7176 0412 8 1992 - £5
16. Selecting a health and safety consultancy INDG133 1992 - FREE
17. COSHH: the new brief guide for employers INDG136 1993 - FREE
18. Getting to grips with manual handling INDG143 1993 - FREE
19. Display screen equipment work: guidance on regulations L26 ISBN 0 7176 0410 1 1992 - £5

Unless otherwise stated, above publications are obtainable from: HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury. Suffolk CO 10 6FS. Tel: 01787 881165. Fax: 01787 313995.

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