

Example risk assessment for a woodworking company

Setting the scene

The owner/manager did the risk assessment at this company, which manufactures furniture and uses a variety of woods and a range of machinery. Six people are employed and two of them work part-time.

The business is located on a small industrial estate, in spacious premises built in 2002 which do not have asbestos-containing materials. There is sufficient space in the yard for loading and unloading vehicles.

Important reminder

This example risk assessment shows the kind of approach a small business might take. Use it as a guide to think through some of the hazards in your business and the steps you need to take to control the risks. Please note that it is not a generic risk assessment that you can just put your company name on and adopt wholesale without any thought. This would not satisfy the law – and would not be effective in protecting people.

Every business is different – you need to think through the hazards and controls required in your business for yourself.

The company has toilet and washing facilities and a mess room where staff can take their breaks, prepare drinks and heat food. A first-aid kit is kept there and is regularly checked to make sure all necessary items are maintained.

How was the risk assessment done?

The manager followed the guidance in *Five steps to risk assessment* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf).

1 To identify the hazards, the manager:

- looked at HSE's web pages for woodworking and for small businesses for free advice and to learn where hazards can occur;
- walked around the premises, inside and out, noting what might pose a risk, taking into consideration what was learnt from HSE's guidance;
- talked to staff to learn from their knowledge and experience of areas and activities, and listen to their concerns and opinions about health and safety issues in the workplace; and
- looked at the accident book, to understand what had previously resulted in incidents.

- 2 The manager then wrote down who could be harmed by the hazards and how.
- 3 For each hazard, the manager wrote down what controls, if any, were in place to manage these hazards. These controls were then compared to the good practice guidance on HSE's website. Where existing controls were not considered good enough, the manager wrote down what else needed to be done to control the risk.
- 4 Putting the risk assessment into practice, the manager decided and recorded who was responsible for implementing the further actions and when they should be done. When each action was completed, it was ticked off and the date recorded. The risk assessment was displayed in the mess room for all staff to see.
- 5 The manager discussed the findings with the staff. A decision was made to review and update the risk assessment every year or straightaway if any major changes in the workplace happened.

Company name: A woodworking company Date of risk assessment: 28/09/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Exposure to wood dust	Staff risk lung diseases, such as asthma, from inhaling wood dust. Hardwood dust can cause cancer, particularly of the nose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Local exhaust ventilation (LEV) provided at machines and staff are trained in using it properly. ■ LEV maintained to keep it in good condition and working effectively. ■ LEV inspected every 14 months by a competent person. ■ Wood dust cleared up using a suitable vacuum cleaner, fitted with an appropriate filter. ■ Suitable respiratory protective equipment (RPE) as well as LEV for very dusty jobs, and staff trained in how to use it. ■ Staff do health surveillance questionnaire before starting, then annually. ■ Any affected staff referred to a medical professional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff of the risks of wood dust, and why these controls are necessary. 	Manager	7/10/07	1/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff never to dry sweep wood dust, which just spreads the dust around. 	Manager	7/10/07	1/10/07
Machinery	Staff risk serious and possibly fatal cut injuries following contact with moving parts of machinery, particularly saw blades.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All machines guarded according to manufacturers' instructions. ■ Guards inspected regularly and maintained as necessary to ensure their good condition. ■ Staff have sufficient space at machines to work safely. ■ Staff monitored by manager to ensure guards always used. ■ All staff trained in safe use of machines by a competent person. ■ All machines braked and fitted with necessary safety features, eg chip limited tooling etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Download information sheets on the safe use of the machines used in the workshop from HSE website and pin them up in mess room. 	Manager	4/10/07	1/1/07
Manual handling	Staff may suffer musculoskeletal disorders, such as back pain, from handling heavy/bulky objects, eg timber boards and machinery parts. Also risk cuts when handling tooling, or splinters when handling pallets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained in manual handling. ■ Workbenches and machine tables set at a comfortable height. ■ Strong, thick gloves provided for handling tooling and pallets. ■ Panel trolley and lifting hooks available for moving boards. ■ Systems of work in place for the safe and careful handling of assembled furniture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Where possible, store tooling next to the machine to reduce carrying distance. ■ 	Manager	30/10/07	29/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff to ask for a new set of gloves when old ones show wear and tear, and not to try to lift objects that appear too heavy. 	Manager	4/4/07	4/4/07

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Noise	Staff and others may suffer temporary or permanent hearing damage from exposure to noise from woodworking machinery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Noise enclosures used where practicable, and maintained in good condition. ■ Low-noise tooling used where possible. ■ Planned maintenance programme for machinery and LEV systems. ■ Suitable hearing protectors provided for staff and staff trained how to use them. Check and maintain them according to advice given by supplier. ■ Staff trained in risks of noise exposure. ■ Staff trained in systems of work to reduce noise exposure (eg suitable feed rates for certain jobs, timber control etc). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider if certain machines could be safely mounted on anti-vibration mountings. 	Manager	30/10/07	29/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Include noise emission in specification for new vertical spindle moulder, to be purchased next year. 	Manager	30/10/07	29/10/07
Vehicles	Staff may suffer serious, possibly fatal, injuries if struck by a vehicle such as a lift truck or a delivery lorry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fork-lift truck maintained and inspected as per lease contract. ■ Lift truck operated only by staff who have been trained to use it. ■ Pedestrian walkways marked. ■ Only authorised people allowed in yard for deliveries/dispatch. ■ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure drivers get out of their vehicle and stand in a safe area while it is being loaded/unloaded. 	Manager and all other staff	30/10/07	15/10/07
Slips, trips and falls	Staff could suffer injuries such as bruising or fractures if they trip over objects, or slip, eg on spillages, and fall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Generally good housekeeping – off-cuts cleared away promptly, dust cleared regularly etc. ■ Staff wear strong safety shoes that have a good grip. ■ Good lighting in all areas. ■ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff to clear up spillages of wax or polish immediately, even very minor spillages. 	Manager	30/10/07	15/10/07
Electrical	Staff could get electrical shocks or burns from using faulty electrical equipment, eg machinery, or a faulty installation. Electrical faults can also lead to fires.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Residual current device (RCD) built into main switchboard. ■ Staff trained to spot and report any defective plugs, discoloured sockets or damaged cable/equipment to manager. ■ No personal electrical appliances, eg toasters or fans, allowed. ■ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask landlord when the next safety check of the electrical installation will be done. 	Company secretary	30/10/07	15/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Confirm with landlord the system for making safe any damage to building installation electrics, eg broken light switches or sockets. 	Company secretary	30/10/07	15/10/07

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Work at height	Falls from any height can cause bruising and fractures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong stepladder, in good condition, provided. ■ Only trained, authorised staff allowed to work at height. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Condition of stepladder to be checked periodically. 	Manager	30/10/07	As required
Fire	If trapped, staff could suffer fatal injuries from smoke inhalation/burns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fire risk assessment done, see www.communities.gov.uk/fire and necessary action taken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure the actions identified as necessary by the fire risk assessment are completed. 	Manager	From now on	

Assessment review date: 28/09/08