

RISK ASSESSMENT

Completing risk assessments

Risk assessments are a means to an end – that end is to ensure safety. The process is a progression of steps to check things are in place. It can be carried out in 5 steps.

1. Look at what is happening or what you are wanting to do and divide it into chunks – for example to risk assess a meeting you could divide it into getting into the building, setting up the venue (the chairs, tables), the activity, clearing away. You could include other parts of the activity like serving drinks etc. Camp could be divided into arriving and setting up, the various activities and games, catering and serving up food, moving around the site, striking camp etc.
2. What are the hazards – what could cause harm and how?
3. Who might be at risk? This is an examination of the different groups who may be involved in whatever you are risk assessing. Consider members of the public/visitors who may not be familiar with the situation compared to those who are regularly there. Also consider ages – younger children may not have the same perception of risk that older children and adults have. They will also not have the strength if the task includes handling objects/chairs.
4. What are you already doing or plan to do to reduce the likelihood of harm or make the harm less serious? Is this adequate to control the situation? Do you need to do something else?
5. The assessment will need to be reviewed to make sure all the controls are in place and stay in place.

Who does the risk assessment?

Anyone who is familiar with a situation can do a risk assessment if they are happy with how the process works and are confident in doing it. Some risk assessments will need to be verified (checked) by someone else depending on the risk. For example in situations where the individual doing the assessment isn't familiar will all the risks they need to ask someone who is familiar to check it. Any situation where the controls may still not prevent injuries/accidents must be verified by the GSL.

A team can carry out risk assessments; there is no limit to who helps. In some situations lots of heads are better than one!

Reviewing your risk assessment

Controls are the most important part of the risk assessment. Therefore reviewing these controls to make sure they are still in place and are adequate is essential. When should they be reviewed? This depends on the risks. For situations where the controls are in place, are adequate and aren't likely to be forgotten, every year is adequate. Where there aren't adequate controls or they could be forgotten about the review must be more frequent. How frequent depends on the risks involved. If you are unsure, ask! If there is an accident or near hit the risk assessment will need checking and ask yourself 'do we need to do anything differently? If the answer is 'yes', then the risk assessment will need reviewing and re-doing.

Who should review the risk assessment?

The person who did the assessment can review it, using a verifier to check it with them if they had the original one verified.

What happens to the risk assessment?

Once a risk assessment has been carried out it needs putting somewhere where you can view it and check that the controls are in place and haven't faded – been forgotten. It would be a good idea to check it when planning new activities and so you can decide whether they are covered in the risk assessments. Or whether new ones are needed.

Any new leaders or helpers will need to be familiar with the risk assessments for your meetings and activities.