

Risk Assessments and Method Statements / Work Instructions

Risk Assessment is a legal requirement whatever the size of Farm Park or Attraction. You will often be told that you do not have to do risk assessments unless you employ 5 or more persons. This is incorrect. You are required to ensure your provisions and arrangements do not put anybody at risk. All employers are required to carry out an assessment of risk and make suitable arrangements, which could involve method statements, for ensuring there is a safe system of work. It is true however that you do not have to have written specific risk assessment records, but the recognition of a hazard and the control measures required will be reflected in your work instructions or method statements.

The five or more rule is regarding who are required to “record the significant findings of the assessments”, in other words a specific written risk assessment document. Strictly speaking, you do not have to have a written record of your assessment if you employ less than 5 persons. Anywhere where you are dealing with the public will lead to questions regarding risk management. You will be expected to demonstrate that you have completed this thought process. The effort and time it takes to fill a form out is well worth taking as it is very difficult to convince those asking, without the written records.

Your risk assessments will be the first set of documentation the insurers or local authority will ask to look at when they visit, especially if they have to follow up an incident or a complaint.

The best way of thinking about risk assessments is that it is a pro-active method of helping to prevent injury to people or animals, serious damage to property or preventing something being forgotten which will cause serious aggravation if it is not corrected or is missed out. Don't just assess injury potential when assessing your risks. You are missing out on a vital step in managing damage, loss and aggravation reduction as well.

Some locations will borrow or copy the assessments from another, thinking they are complying with legislation. They are not. Although some of the information is generic, there will be some changes because the locations are different and activities are managed in a different way. The assessments must apply to your location and activities. If you do borrow assessments, make sure you revise them to suit your location and arrangements.

There is also one other myth which is often repeated and if you follow that advice, could lead you to troubled waters. It is often said you must review your risk assessments annually; this is not strictly correct and could lead you to wait until the 12 months is up before you review an assessment. You are required to review any risk assessment or method statement/work instruction when a significant failure occurs or when an incident leads to either injury or serious damage. That review is primarily to see if the controls you employ are not sufficient to control the risk.

There are some very basic rules to keep to, to ensure your risk assessments are as effective as needs be and you have complied with the legal requirements.

1. Make sure the activities you assess reflect HOW YOU ACTUALLY DO THINGS and not what you think is done.

2. Make sure your control measures actually succeed in reducing the risks.
3. Make sure you have implemented the controls.
4. Make sure you have monitored the results of the control measures to ensure they are effective
5. Make sure you have briefed your staff as to the levels of risk you have identified and the measures required to reduce the risks.
6. Make sure you are informing the public of the steps they need to be taking and ensure you have explained the reasons why they need to be taking the steps required.

There is a very good guide to writing risk assessment published by the HSE entitled “5 Steps to Risk Assessments” [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf] which reflects much of what is in this guidance.

There are some very expensive preparatory risk assessment packages on the market which some say, are vital to use in order to prevent prosecution. This is just a marketing ploy and is totally incorrect. The same can be said for those some insurers pressurise you to use. Indeed they may even want you to employ their risk managers to write them for you. Don't be fooled by these arguments. The more complicated the process, the higher the likelihood you are to miss a vital step, and the more money you will spend with your service provider to sort it out. Legislation says that it is you who must carry out the assessments of your workplace and public attractions. The vast majority of enforcement inspectors will be very happy with a simple record that reflects your thoughts and opinions that you understand, devised and implemented.

How to write a Risk Assessment

The most successful way of writing risk assessments is to make your process as simple as possible and involve as many experienced people in the thought process. You should also complete the assessment documentation as you go through the various activities and not by trying to remember points as you go on.

Keep a level head when thinking about the effects / outcomes of a risk occurring. Risks may not always occur and they will not always cause life threatening injuries. Use a big helping of common sense.

Do not break the headings down into finite levels of activity unless the task being undertaken is very complex. Use these headings as guidance and then highlight the general activities that are carried out in those areas:

Location Entrances and Car Parks

Public Walkways, Animal Feeding and Petting Areas

Public Meeting, Picnic and Recreational Areas

Play Areas and Play Equipment

Food Preparation Areas, Kiosks, Cafés and Kitchens

Mechanical & Visitor Attraction Equipment

Employment of Young Persons

First Aid Treatments

Most of those activities will require further breakdown depending on what is carried out in those areas and by whom. The risk levels to adults will in some cases be different to your children or the elderly. They will certainly differ when considering your staff completing a task and that of the public. Two examples are the Animal Feeding / Petting Areas and the Visitor Transport Equipment.

There is no mandatory format for a risk assessment record sheet. It can be as simple as a piece of paper split into five columns will suffice, but it does have to explain what your findings are and what you identify as a control measure.

Scoring the Likelihood of a risk occurring, or the perceived Outcome should it occur is a very good way of making sure your response is proportionate and properly targeted. Attached is a Risk Assessment Matrix which will help you to identify sensible levels of risk and will assist you to maintain continuity in your assessments.

Remember, the most effective way of reducing a risk is to target how the risk can occur. One very good example is exposure to Bacterial Disease. The likelihood is far greater if the public can make contact with faeces, liquid run off or they cannot wash their hands having touched petted an animal. Reversing those situations is the Control measure and you identify that measure in the Control Measure column.

There is however one very important exception to this general risk management rule. Because the effect of many bacterial infections can be life threatening or CAN have serious long-term health effects, the score for the outcome of an infection must not be lower than 3 and specifically recorded in your risk assessment. This will not however mean that you inevitably will have a high risk. Your measures to control the likelihood of contact will be the key element.

Hazards	How will it occur	Likelihood	Outcome	Control Measures
What can go wrong	How it can go wrong OR What will arise if not corrected	How likely it is to happen	What the outcome will be if it occurs	What are we doing to prevent it happening

Attached at the bottom of this Practice Note is a matrix which outlines an additional system which many users have found useful. It helps to quantify the risk and by doing so, identify whether the risk is significantly high and requiring major consideration.

Both systems will assist you to target the necessary controls you need to prevent the risk from occurring. By paying close attention to the contents of column two, **How it will occur**, you will identify what needs to be countered.

The control measures you introduce are the key to reducing the likelihood of a risk occurring. There is a hierarchy of risk controls that must be applied. Two examples that I would give is:

- Ensuring that faeces or liquid run off is not allowed to remain where the public can make physical contact is a far higher level of control than hand washing.
- Removing a damaged item of equipment from use and making a permanent repair is far better than making a temporary repair.

The language you use is very important. If it's an area where under 5's can touch animals and you do not want it to happen here, then say so. If it's very likely to happen then again say so and finally if it could result in contacting bacteria then say so. The phrases that are the most successful are:

Likelihood: Very Unlikely – Likely - Very Likely - Almost certain.

Outcome: Minor First Aid - First Aid - Treatment at Out-Patients - Detained in Hospital – Fatal Injury

The key is then to identify practical measures to prevent it happening. You need to ensure your response to a hazard is appropriate and proportionate. Those hazards you have identified as Likely, Very Likely or Almost Certain to occur will at some point result in injury, illness or damage and you need to take some action to prevent it. Likewise if the injury or illness will result in the person being taken for Treatment at Out-Patients even for a check-up then do something to prevent it happening. The requirements for such actions are to reduce the risks to the lowest level obtainable.

You also have to remember that the risks will differ depending on the time of year. You will have to ensure you identify in your control measures for extreme weather condition and animals behaviour in certain times of year, feeding in deer parks for instance.

You would also be advised to assess and have provisions in place in case animals get loose from enclosures.

Lastly, record your assessment and the success of the action taken for future reference. This process will ensure you have a structured approach to the process and will ensure you reach the same level of responses to the risks identified. The good news is that once you have done an assessment on a particular risk then it is done and you won't have to do it again until next year – unless of course the circumstances change.

Risk Assessment Matrix

Score	Likelihood of occurrence	Score	Severity or Outcome	
			Injury to persons	Damage to property
5	<i>Happens every year</i>	5	<i>Death or Permanent Disability</i>	<i>Destruction of structure or property</i>
4	<i>Has happened here but not in the last 12 months</i>	4	<i>Hospitalisation</i>	<i>Significant damage – Reportable to HSE</i>
3	<i>Has happened here but not in the last two years</i>	3	<i>Treatment by Local Doctor/Vet</i>	<i>Maintenance required for continual use</i>
2	<i>Not happened here, but I have heard of it happening elsewhere</i>	2	<i>F/A Treatment / Treatment by Site Staff</i>	<i>Repairs completed without disruption</i>
1	<i>Not happened here and I have not heard of it happening elsewhere</i>	1	<i>Discomfort</i>	<i>Slight scratches</i>

Multiply the Likelihood Score by the Severity or Outcome Score to arrive at a Risk Level.

The colour depict your risk Level

Likelihood	5	10	15	20	25
	4	8	12	16	20
	3	6	9	12	15
	2	4	6	8	10
	1	2	3	4	5
Severity or Outcome					

Risk Level
HIGH RISK
Medium Risk
Low Risk

Action to be taken

High	Risk must be controlled by change of procedure or additional provisions. <i>Re assess to ensure the risk has reduced to below 8</i>
Medium	Take action to reduce risk at the location provided the benefits are proportionate to the costs Re - assess to ensure the risk level has reduced before spending the money. Ensure action is made permanent
Low	Monitor throughout the running of the location

EXAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT ONLY

Activity: **Outdoor Nature Walks**

Assessment Date: **June 2010**

Main Risk Areas: **Slip, Trips and Falls. Excessive fatigue due to terrain**

Assessed by: **Ray Hipkin**

Hazards What can go wrong	How will it occur	Likelihood	Outcome	Risk Level	Additional measures to be introduced
		With all control measures in place on attached checklist			Refer to checklist
Slips, Trips and Fall of person on BOTH the walks	Failure to take notice of where feet are being placed. Not wearing sensible footwear Failure to read or follow instructions Lack of management inspection for rabbit / badger holes appearing.	2	3	L	Walks to be designated into two levels. Blue the easiest and RED the most demanding. Notices to be placed at the start of both walks informing the walker of the routes and footwear required to complete the walk. Regular inspections to be carried out by management to ensure the integrity of the walks are not compromised by wild animal activity.
Walker suffering from excessive fatigue on the RED ROUTE walk due to terrain	Failure to take notice of where feet are being placed. Lack of fitness on behalf of the walker. Not wearing sensible footwear Failure to read or follow instructions	2	3	L	Secondary signage reminding walker of the terrain and demands of the RED walk at both ends of the walk.