

Food Alert

Risky Business – why risk assessments are so important



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Health & Safety at work matters – it's not just a case of it being a statutory requirement, but every year over a million workers are injured or made ill by their work in the UK, costing £16.2 bn. As an employer (or even self-employed person), you are responsible by law to protect your employees and others from harm. That's why prevention is better than cure! Regular risk assessments are not only important but a legal requirement, so you can identify risks and hazards and manage them with sensible and proportionate precautions. Our team of experts have pulled together this guide to explain in more detail what a risk assessment is and how to complete them.

What is a risk assessment?

Working in hospitality can be a risky business – from slips and trips to lifting and contact with hot surfaces and harmful substances – with many injuries reported to the HSE every year. That's why risk assessments are a legal requirement and are there to help managers identify who is at risk and implement measures to protect them.

Even when you have control measures already in place, regular risk assessments and reviews are still important to ascertain whether these are up to date or whether new ones need to be created to replace them.

As a minimum you must:



HAZARD

Identify what could cause injury or illness in your business



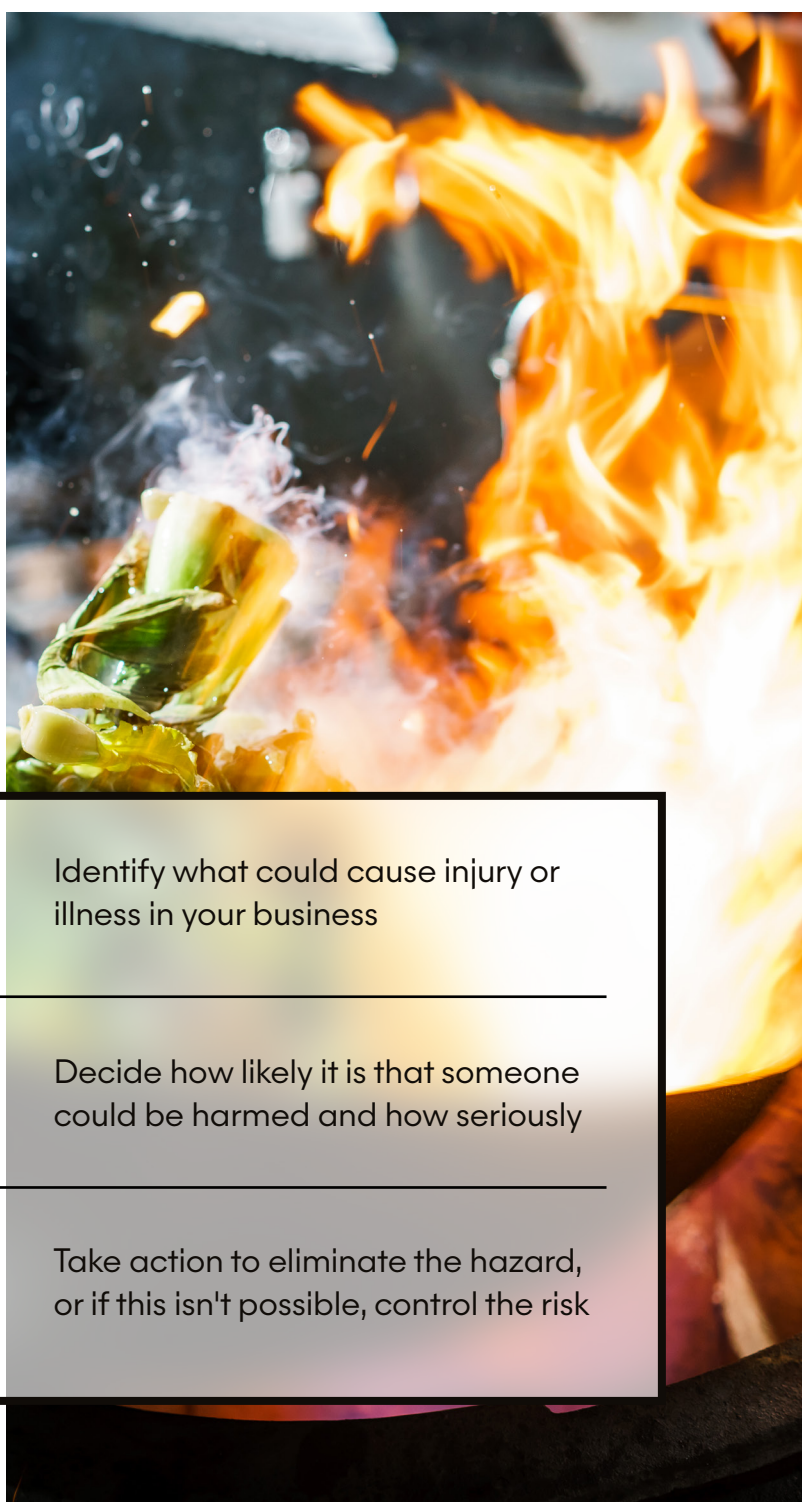
RISK

Decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how seriously



CONTROL

Take action to eliminate the hazard, or if this isn't possible, control the risk



How to complete a risk assessment

One

Identify hazards

Firstly, you should identify hazards – things that may cause harm and who may be harmed by them.

Main hazards include:

- ✗ Contact with heat, hot surfaces and steam
- ✗ Slipping on wet or greasy floors
- ✗ Tripping over unexpected objects or uneven walkways etc
- ✗ Falls or falling objects
- ✗ Knives
- ✗ Contact with chemicals
- ✗ Electricity
- ✗ Flammable substances

There are many more, but you only need to risk assess significant hazards that can cause harm.

You don't need to risk assess trivial things, for example, we have seen risk assessments for using a pencil sharpener – these really are not required!

The balance between risk and harm should be looked at and sensible risk management is about reducing death, serious injury and ill health in the workplace and is not about creating a world that is risk free!

For each hazard, think about how employees, contractors, visitors or members of the public might be harmed. It is always helpful to talk with your employees as they will be aware of the hazards and existing controls.

Two

Assess the risks

Once you have identified the hazards, decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how serious it could be. This is assessing the level of risk and will allow you to prioritise your actions and ensure that your resources are being used where they are most required.

Three

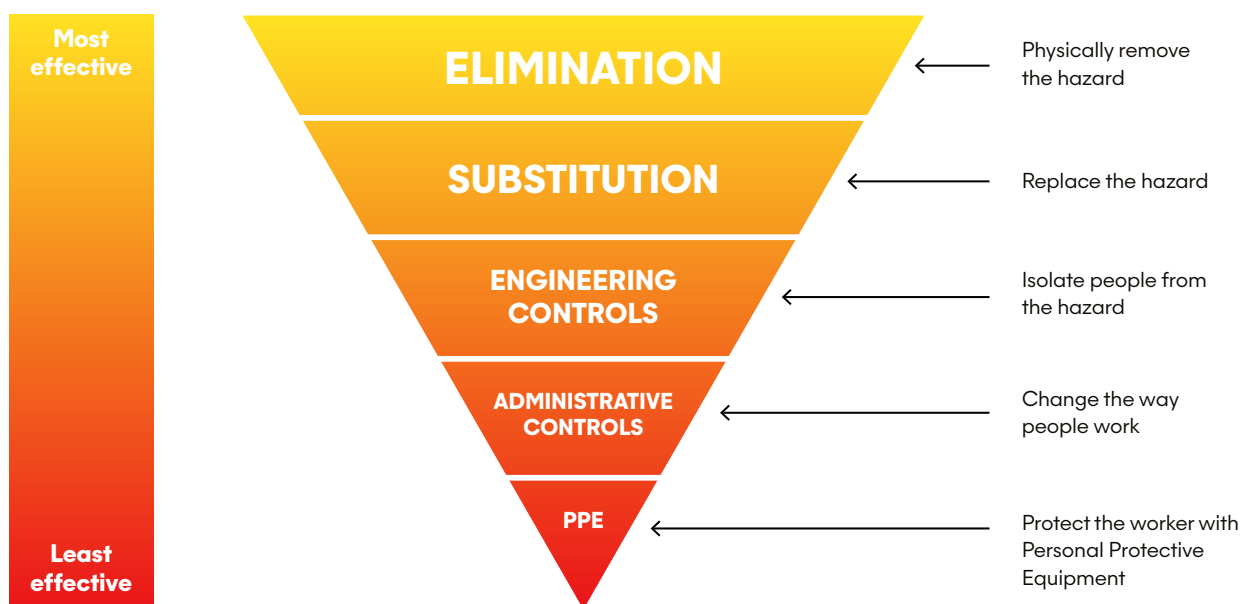
Control the risks

Look at what you're already doing, and the controls you have in place.

The Hierarchy of Controls is used in workplace environments to minimise or eliminate exposure to hazards. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be your last choice and priority should be given to measures that will protect more than just one person.



Hierarchy of Controls



Practical Tips:

- **Elimination:** re-design the job to eliminate the need of manual handling or working at height
- **Substitution:** change a hazardous substance for a less hazardous one
- **Engineering controls:** use guarding on equipment or machinery to separate the employee from the hazard
- **Administrative controls:** rotate your employees around tasks to reduce the time they work in that environment
- **PPE:** if all the above methods are ineffective then you should consider the use of PPE.

Put the controls you have identified in place. You're not expected to eliminate all risks, but you need to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. This means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of money, time or effort.

RECORD YOUR FINDINGS

If you employ 5 or more people, you must record your significant findings, including:

- The hazards (things that may cause harm)
- Who might be harmed and how
- What you are doing to control the risks

DON'T FORGET!

You must review your risk assessments!

Risk assessments are only effective and relevant if they're kept up to date. They should be reviewed at least once a year or when there are changes to the business operations or there is an incident such as a near miss or accident.

How can Food Alert help?

At Food Alert we are here to remove the stress of completing risk assessments – from practical advice and guidance to our cloud-based food and health & safety compliance software, Alert65.

Switching to Alert65 will make risk assessments a breeze and remove piles of paperwork as everything will be stored digitally, so the necessary reminders, checklists, certificates and training programmes are easy to access at any time, from any location.

Working as an extension of your team, we will help you to understand what tasks you need to risk assess across your business, build your confidence and remind you when it's time to review your risk assessments.

Our clients love the support that they receive from Food Alert to create their risk assessments and the structure and assurance that Alert65 provides.

Contact us for a demo and we will help take the worry out of risk assessments and help to keep your business, employees and the public safe.