Safety Method Statements and Risk Assessment
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The use and significance of the safety method statement and its incorporation into the health and safety plan under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (S.I. 1994, No. 3140) is described. The prior completion of a risk assessment is the first step in its preparation.

Latest Updates

22/07/2002
In construction activities, the need to adhere to properly drawn up safety method statements is highlighted by a case in which the neglect of a building company to properly follow the design plans resulted in a collapse of a wall, as shown in the Introduction.

03/08/2001
In the Introduction, new case law is given indicating the legal requirement for contractors and subcontractors to warn of their awareness of dangerous inadequacies in the design of works, even if they do not have a contractual design responsibility.

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3. An employer has a duty to eliminate or control significant risk which is identified through the use of a risk assessment. See What is a Risk Assessment? and What is a Risk Assessment?.

4. The Health and Safety Executive recommend that any risk assessment is conducted by following five steps. These steps establish who is likely to be harmed and the extent of the risk. See What is a Risk Assessment?.

5. The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (S.I. 1994, No. 3140) identify who should be responsible for health and safety and any risk assessment in construction projects. See Who is Responsible for Risk Assessment?.

6. The health and safety plan is an integral part of the construction project and should contain details of risk assessments. See Who is Responsible for Risk Assessment?.

7. As a result of risk assessments, safety method statements should be prepared by the contractor/employer to eliminate or control risk. See What is the Safety Method Statement? and Need for the Safety Method Statement.

8. The safety method statement should contain details of how a task should be performed and should incorporate details of the health and safety policy. See Contents of a Safety Method Statement.


10. Particularly high risk or hazardous work should always be conducted in accordance with a safety method statement. See Hazardous Work.
1. Introduction

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (S.I. 1999, No. 3242) (the Management Regulations) apply to every type of work and require every employer to plan, monitor and review their work and the methods used by their employees to perform it successfully. The Management Regulations were introduced to help employers to comply with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and thus improve the health and safety of employees generally. The Regulations do this by making explicit precisely what is required of employers. In brief, they require the employer to:

1. Assess any risks associated with the work in question
2. Ensure that access is available to adequate health and safety advice and that the advice is consulted when necessary
3. Provide all employees with health and safety advice and information together with training, when necessary
4. Have systems in place to deal with danger by setting up emergency procedures which are known to all employees
5. Consult with other employers using the same workplace to ensure that any procedures are co-ordinated
6. Appoint a health and safety manager who is adequately trained in health and safety matters

For the purposes of this topic it is the assessment of risk and the subsequent preparation and use of safety method statements that is most pertinent.

It is worth noting that employees also have obligations under the Management Regulations. These are to report dangerous situations and notify the employer of any perceived shortcomings in the procedures. In addition, employees must comply with any health and safety procedures that are implemented and use the training which has been given. Failure to do this could mean that the employee loses any rights to compensation in the event of an injury sustained in the workplace.

The construction industry is, by its very nature, hazardous. The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (S.I. 1994, No. 3140) (CDM Regulations) were introduced specifically to deal with the additional needs of the construction industry and to reinforce the Management Regulations. As stated above, the Management Regulations apply to all employers irrespective of the size or the nature of the business. In contrast, the CDM Regulations only apply to the construction industry, although they do cast their net wide enough to catch all participants in a construction project from the architect to the plasterer. The CDM Regulations thus impose health and safety responsibilities on all the participants in a construction project, from the design stage through to completion of the work. In accordance with the regulations it is the principal contractor who is responsible for the preparation of the health and safety plan and, subsequently, the health and safety file, although the planning supervisor will be required to co-ordinate this and oversee its application in practice. The health and safety manager on the site on a day to day basis should be able to identify the health and safety issues from the plan and its accompanying documents.

The following section describes the health and safety plan and the health and safety file.

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (S.I. 1994, No. 3140) are designed to improve the health and safety not only of all persons on construction sites but also of those who, at a later date, will be occupiers or users of the new building or structure. The health and safety plan is prepared in two stages - the pre-tender plan and the construction phase plan. The former is prepared by the planning supervisor with information from the client and designers and basically sets out the nature of the project and the likely health and safety aspects which need to be taken into account by the contractor. The contractor, when tendering for the project, is obliged to explain to the client what measures will be taken to deal with health and safety. The client will then be able to assess the competence of the contractor from a health and safety angle before accepting the tender. Of course, the plan at this stage will be very basic and can only reflect the obvious. Up to this stage the planning supervisor will be responsible for the plan and ensuring its implementation.

Once the principal contractor has been appointed, he or she takes over responsibility for the plan. At this stage it will be necessary to thoroughly investigate the site to ensure that all health and safety issues are identified and dealt with within the plan. The plan may need to be altered and added to during the course of the project as specifications and ground conditions change.

The health and safety file is a document which is compiled and added to on an on-going basis throughout the life of the project. It is handed over to the first occupier of the building or structure and should contain details about maintenance.
and use of the building. It should highlight any potentially dangerous features of the building, such as the problems of cleaning windows on the 25th floor, and explain how the designer envisaged that this could be done safely. It should also contain details of the plant and machinery in the building and the most effective method of use of these. The file, although written throughout the project as different items come to the attention of the principal contractor, is really an end-user guide to the building. The responsibility for its completion lies with the planning supervisor.

Preparation of the health and safety plan cannot be completed until the hazards associated with the project have been identified and a statement prepared to describe how each particular aspect of the project should be approached. The identification of hazards is known as ‘risk assessment’ and the statement dealing with those hazards is a ‘safety method statement’.

While the method statement necessary for construction work to form part of the safety plan required under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (S.I. 1994, No. 3140), mainly applies to the contractually required work, case law shows that the contractor also has a duty to warn of dangerous inadequacies in the design of the works, even where they have no contractual design responsibility. In the case of Plant Construction Ltd v. JMH Construction Services Ltd and Another (2000 TCLR, p.513) the Court of Appeal held that this was a duty held by contractors. During some work for a client, Plant Construction Limited, as a result of a dangerous system of propping, caused a roof to collapse. The client sued Plant Construction Limited, who admitted liability, and in turn Plant Construction Limited sued their engineering sub-contractor, JMH Construction Services Ltd. The sub-contractor had erected the propping system, which they knew to be inadequate, but having no design responsibility, did not warn of the danger. The court held that the competent contractor - JMH Construction Services Ltd, in this case - had a contractual duty to warn their client where they had actual knowledge of design inadequacies, even though they had no design responsibility. As a result of this decision, contractors may have a liability in future if they ought to have known of inadequacies in a design to which they are required to work whether the inadequacies pose a likely danger or not.

In construction activities, the need to adhere to properly drawn up safety method statements is highlighted by a case in which the neglect of a building company to properly follow the design plans resulted in a collapse of a wall.

Wales-based construction firm Watkin Jones and Son was ordered to pay £27,000 on 15 July 2002 after a three-metre-high wall collapsed, as reported by Construction News (16 July, 2002). Operations director John Mendoze pleaded guilty on behalf of the Bangor-based firm to two breaches of health and safety laws. The company was fined a total of £12,500 and was ordered to pay costs of £14,336.

Watkins Jones and Son were converting a former chapel in Conwy, Wales, into a surgery when the incident happened on 23 August 2000. Plans were drawn up for a 14m-long wall above the level of the road and next to the doctor’s surgery. A consultant appraised the scheme and drew up changes including ‘weep-holes’ and drains that were needed to ease water pressure. A council official visited the site in August and found no ‘weep-holes’ had been added and the next day the wall collapsed. After the incident health and safety officials found that no drain had been built behind the wall.
2. Risk Assessment

2.1 What is a Risk Assessment?

'Risk' is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as 'the likelihood that harm from a particular hazard will be realised and the possible extent of that harm'. Once the risk has been assessed it is possible to classify it as either significant or trivial. Significant risk must be eliminated or controlled to comply with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (S.I. 1999, No. 3242), reg. 3. Risk cannot be completely eliminated and it is accepted that minor or trivial risks cannot be completely controlled. The employee does have some responsibility for their own welfare. The employer's task is therefore to establish which risks are significant and do need to be dealt with.

2.2 How is Risk Assessed?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommends that risk assessment is tackled in five logical steps, thus minimising the likelihood that any item will be missed. Of course, on a large construction project there will need to be a number of risk assessments conducted at different stages of the project as the perceived risk alters during the construction process. For example, the risk associated with excavation will probably have ceased by the time the risk from working at height has become of significance.

In addition, each individual firm employed during the project will be conducting its own risk assessment to ensure that it complies with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (S.I. 1999, No. 3242). As a result, the health and safety manager must be able to take an overview to ensure that the various identified hazards are adequately addressed. They must not be left by one employer for another working on the site (and then ignored by both), nor must they be dealt with by both in a conflicting way.

It is possible for a risk assessment which was prepared for another project to be used again. Many tasks are repeated and the contractor should already have in place suitable procedures to deal with common situations. However, the existence of a risk assessment must not lead to a sense of complacency. In the construction industry each project is individual because the site and the working conditions will change. For example, a risk assessment for working at height in an inner city environment will differ from one where the site adjoins a lake.

The five recommended steps in preparing a risk assessment are detailed below.

2.2.1 Step 1: Look for the Hazard

Each task must be considered individually, together with how it will be done, where it will be carried out and the equipment to be used. The easiest way to do this with construction work is to look at each individual part of the task under review. Analysis of the task should include the following:

Items to Consider when Conducting the Hazard Analysis of a Task

- Where is the task going to take place? If it is at height or in a confined space there are immediate hazards for consideration.
- Will specialised plant and equipment be needed? If so, will the employee using the plant require specialised training or would it be safer for a specialised operator be hired with the plant?
- Will any dangerous substances be used? If so, will special precautions be necessary, such as personal protective equipment?

Particularly common construction hazards are described in the following section.

In the construction industry the following activities regularly produce accidents:
1. Collapse of an excavation or the dropping of items from height onto workers below
2. Being hit by construction site vehicles
3. Mobile plant which is used incorrectly or without adequate training
4. Working with materials that can cause injury to health such as solvents in glue or paint
5. Falling through fragile structures such as glass roofs
6. Dust produced from cutting, grinding and drilling

Hazards can also be identified by looking at accident statistics.

2.2.2 Step 2: Decide Who Might be Harmed and How

It is necessary to consider all potential users of the site. This means that any risk assessment must identify not only the employees of the principal contractor but also all the other persons who might attend at the site. This may include subcontractors, building regulation inspectors, quantity surveyors, representatives of the service industries, the client and members of the public, either invited or as trespassers.

It is also essential that, at this stage, a note is made of the impact one aspect of the project may have on other workers employed by different firms. Co-ordination between firms is vital if a comprehensive safety plan is to follow from the risk assessment.

Finally, it is necessary to identify those persons who may be at greater risk as they may require different treatment or additional training before being safely exposed to the risk. These would include:

1. **Young employees.** These may be inexperienced and need guidance, not only in specialised tasks but also in tasks that are common but unfamiliar to them. Furthermore, there are other regulations which prohibit persons under the age of 18 from carrying out some activities, such as the removal of asbestos. Also the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (S.I. 1999, No. 3242), reg. 3(4) & (5) require employers to conduct a specific risk assessment for employees under the age of 18.

2. **New employees.** Such people may fall into two categories - those new to the organisation and those new to the type of work. Any training must be directed at the needs of the new employee.

3. **Children.** These may be attracted to the area without authorisation, but consideration must be given to preventing any unauthorised access as it is a recognised fact that construction sites are inviting to children.

4. **Visitors.** These include the emergency services and inspectors who cannot be made familiar with the health and safety arrangements prior to their attendance on site.

5. **Lone workers.** Persons who perform their task alone may suffer injury or illness without it becoming known to others on the site. Precautions must be taken to ensure that regular checks are made of these people by, perhaps, the use of mobile telephones.

6. **People with disabilities.** For example, a medical condition which is exacerbated by breathing fumes or dust should not prevent people from working if controls can be put in place to alleviate the problem.

The HSE has compiled a 'Construction Health and Safety Checklist' (Construction Sheet No. 7) to identify common hazards on the construction site.

2.2.3 Step 3: Evaluate the Risks and Decide on Action

Having identified the hazards and those at risk, it is necessary to assess the likelihood of harm from that risk. It is not possible to eliminate all risk and some minor risks will remain in the most organised workplace. What must be achieved is the elimination or control of **significant risks**, that is risks which could lead to serious harm or affect a number of people. This aspect of the assessment can be approached by asking three questions.

1. **Can the risk be eliminated completely?** If it can, either by carrying out the work in a different way or by using different materials, then the job programme should be changed to eliminate the risk.
2. Can the risk be controlled? Clearly all risks cannot be eliminated, but many can be controlled by using safe systems of work. For example, noisy equipment during a construction project is inevitable, but the noise could be controlled in a number of ways. It may be possible to use mufflers on drills and to keep the covers closed on compressors. It is essential to ensure that the equipment is properly maintained, that silencers are in good condition and that workers are issued with protective clothing, such as ear defenders, when necessary.

3. Can protective measures be taken to make the risk of harm acceptable? Protective measures, such as personal protective equipment, should be used as a last resort, only when no other method of reducing the risk is available. These should be looked on as giving additional rather than primary protection. Protective measures may also be useful to protect a number of people, such as guard rails around excavations and warning signs when entering the site.

Although the legislation and guidance is aimed at significant risks, it would be naïve and possibly disastrous for trivial risks to be ignored. Unfortunately, until a risk has been identified and then classified, taking into account not only the risk but also the persons affected by it, it is difficult to determine which risks are significant and which can be regarded as trivial.

2.2.4 Step 4: Record the Findings

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (S.I. 1999, No. 3242), reg. 3(6) require that any employer with more than five employees records the significant findings of a risk assessment in writing. When there are less than five employees, any information about perceived risks should be passed on to the workforce (it doesn't have to be in writing), together with details of the steps taken to control the risk and any protective measures which each employee should use. On a construction site there may be a number of small employers, each with less than five employees. Although each employer will not be obliged to produce a written risk assessment to comply with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (S.I. 1999, No. 3242), the project will be subject to the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (S.I. 1994, No. 3140) and the principal contractor or other designated person will need to prepare the health and safety plan for the construction phase. It is good management for the principal contractor to require even small subcontractors to report to them on their own risk assessment to ensure that its findings are incorporated into the health and safety plan and, on larger projects, that there are no conflicts.

2.2.5 Step 5: Review the Findings

It is important that regular reviews of each risk assessment are carried out. These enable any alterations which have been introduced into the project (perhaps as a result of changes in the specification by the client) to be taken into account; it permits any areas where safety has become of concern to be reviewed (maybe because the original controls have not worked satisfactorily); it identifies potential increased risk (perhaps resulting from additional contractors on the site who need to be integrated into the programme).

It is not always necessary for a new assessment to be undertaken at every review because there may have been no significant changes to the project and the original assessment may have proved satisfactory. What is essential, however, is that the need for regular reviews is identified and these are built into the health and safety programme.

The HSE has issued a form to assist with the preparation of a risk assessment.

When using this form it must be borne in mind that it has been prepared for use by all employers and may not appear appropriate for the construction site. However, it does give written guidance which is easy to follow, particularly for the smaller contractor, as well as suggesting possible alternatives to reduce identified risks.

The risk assessment should be sufficient and should demonstrate that a proper check has been made and that the precautions indicated are reasonable. It is accepted that no assessment is perfect, but clearly more time must be spent on high risk activities or those which potentially might affect a large number of people. Similarly, the precautions required must be 'reasonably practicable' in all the circumstances.

2.3 Who is Responsible for Risk Assessment?

It is usual, even on the smallest construction project, for there to be more than one party involved in the construction process. On a large project there could be any number of small subcontractors and self-employed persons, as well as the
principal contractor, the design team and the client. It is clearly necessary to identify who is responsible for the overall health and safety on the site during the project.

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (S.I. 1994, No. 3140) specify that the client must ensure that the planning supervisor appointed in respect of a project is capable of fulfilling his or her duties under the regulations. One of these duties is ensuring that before the commencement of a project, at pre-tender stage a health and safety plan is in place. The content of the plan will depend on the nature and the size of the project but it should contain at least the following information:

1. Name of client
2. Location of site
3. Nature of construction work
4. Timescale
5. Perceived significant hazards
6. Access arrangements to the site
7. Any site rules

From the above, the prospective principal contractor can take into account when tendering the health and safety aspects of the project and demonstrate to the client that they can allocate and provide within the budget adequate resources to deal with this aspect. Once the principal contractor has been appointed, the planning supervisor's role is to co-ordinate where necessary the health and safety aspects of the design and ensure that the health and safety file is being prepared during the construction process.

The engineering and construction contract (ECC) was produced to take into account the guidance given by Sir Michael Latham in his report 'Constructing the Team' and is now preferred to the old JCT form of contract. The responsibility for health and safety is recognised in both this and the professional services contract which is designed to stand alongside the ECC. The latter specifies that each professional should have an identified health and safety role in addition to the obligation to comply with the general law. Apart from clarifying the function which the professional is expected to fulfil this also ensures that each person or organisation is aware of its own responsibilities, making it less likely for errors to occur.

Since the introduction of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (S.I. 1994, No. 3140), the responsibility for health and safety issues has been extended to almost every person and company involved in the construction process. Despite this, the initial responsibility for health and safety on the site falls to the planning supervisor who must produce, with the client, a health and safety plan at pre-tender stage. By the time the construction work is commenced, day-to-day responsibility is passed from the planning supervisor to the principal contractor who should have reviewed the pre-tender health and safety plan and incorporated into it the following more specific items.

1. Any risk assessments already carried out under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (S.I. 1999, No. 3242)
2. Any common arrangements to all workers or visitors to the site, such as welfare facilities and emergency procedures
3. The arrangements for monitoring health and safety performance on the site and to ensure that the procedures are being implemented
4. Any safety method statements
5. Times for the regular review of the risk assessments as the project progresses
3. The Safety Method Statement

3.1 What is the Safety Method Statement?

The HSE defines the safety method statement as 'a written document laying out the work procedures and sequence of operations to ensure health and safety. It results from the risk assessment carried out for the task or operation and the control measures identified.'

At its most basic, the safety method statement is a management tool that is prepared by compiling all the information produced, first by a risk assessment and, secondly, by any other assessment necessary for the particular job (for example, under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002, No. 2677)). Finally, information from other sources, such as advice taken from a code of practice, should be added and the whole thing brought together into one cohesive document.

In a large construction project there will be a number of safety method statements, each dealing with a specific task. A contractor should have various safety method statements available outlining their usual health and safety practice for common tasks, because the basic principles for, say, working in excavations will not change. Furthermore, a well organised contractor should incorporate any method statement into the company's safety policy and procedures. Having said that, each safety method statement will need to be adapted to take account of specific requirements of the task and should also be developed through experience.

3.2 Need for the Safety Method Statement

Unlike a risk assessment, a safety method statement (also called a 'health and safety method statement' or simply a 'method statement') is not required by law. However, the HSE recommends its use as it has proved to be invaluable in higher risk work like demolition. Furthermore, as the contractors standard forms of method statement for, say, working at height would be made available to the client at the tender stage, it allows the client to assess the suitability of the principal contractor who can use it to demonstrate that safe systems of work are practised.

The following section describes a case which demonstrates the advantages of a safety method statement.

In the unreported case of Health and Safety Executive v. Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey which was heard before a magistrates' court, an inspector from the HSE described how an employee was injured when he fell through a hole between exposed joists. He fell twenty feet and suffered fractures and broken bones. The Dean and Chapter (the employer for the purposes of the legislation) had conducted a risk assessment and had considered the risk of falling from the edge of the roof. It had not considered the possibility of falling through the roof, nor had it prepared a method statement which, it was felt, would have helped to highlight this as a potential hazard. The organisation was fined £5,000 and had to pay £1,000 towards the costs of the HSE.

3.3 Contents of a Safety Method Statement

The method statement describes how a task is to be carried out, including all the measures which have been identified by the risk assessment. It will also highlight any training which is necessary before the employees can be permitted to embark on the task. It therefore, establishes a 'working method' to be adopted by the employees engaged in the specified task. The statement should also contain details of the health and safety policy of the organisation, together with its training procedures and any emergency arrangements.

3.4 The Safety Method Statement and the Health and Safety Plan

Once prepared, the method statement will be incorporated into the health and safety plan for the project. There are two health and safety plans during a construction project, the first is compiled at the pre-tender stage and the second is used during the construction phase. The latter is the responsibility of the principal contractor and details how the construction work will be managed during the construction phase to ensure that health and safety requirements are met. As this is a written document it means that any contractor (or other authorised person) has easy and immediate access to information about the safety practices and procedures on the site. It permits new contractors to prepare their own risk assessments, integrating them into the existing procedures, and enables the health and safety manager to assess whether or not the...
working methods set out in the safety method statement are being used and where there are failures in communication or training.

The health and safety plan may be updated during the course of a project. For example, a subcontractor may not be needed on site until part way through the project. Before commencing on site the subcontractor should produce their safety method statement and present it to the principal contractor who should check its suitability. These checks would include ensuring that:

1. A formal risk assessment has been conducted
2. Adequate health and safety precautions have been incorporated
3. The method statement is compatible with the existing plan

When satisfied on these points the new safety method statement can be incorporated into the plan.

### 3.5 Hazardous Work

Certain types of hazardous work should always require a formal method statement. These are described in the following list which is not exhaustive as some tasks become hazardous because of their location or due to other specific factors pertinent to that task.

1. Work in confined spaces
2. Work underground
3. Work at great height
4. Work involving dangerous materials
5. Steel and formwork erection
6. Demolition
7. Work near or over water
8. Work with or near overhead power lines

#### 3.5.1 The Use of Permits to Work

Some tasks are especially hazardous and require extra care. These tasks cannot be carried out without the issue of a ‘permit to work’. This document is used to impose further control on hazardous work by establishing a safe system of work for that specific task. The permit also states exactly what work is to be done and details the time the work should commence and when it should be completed. The employee required to carry out the work must obtain a signed permit from an authorised person, and the authorised person must fully understand the task and be able to discuss it in detail with the employee prior to issue of the permit. The employee must sign the permit to acknowledge receipt and, implicitly, to confirm that they accept the risk and have been adequately briefed. The aim of this procedure is to ensure that the employee is fully briefed on the method of carrying out the task, the safety procedures in place and the precautions which are required.

Permits to work are needed in all high risk tasks and in the following circumstances:

1. Work in confined spaces
2. Hot work which may cause an explosion or a fire
3. Work with pipework carrying hazardous substances

On completion of the task, the employee must return the permit to the authorised person who, in turn, must sign off the job. This extra check ensures that any permits which are not returned are immediately noticed and investigated.
The following section contains an example of a permit to work.

The need for a permit to work on a particular task is included in the safety method statement. Again this ensures that the health and safety manager is aware of when permits are needed and can monitor that the system is working correctly and effectively.
4. Advice on Risk Assessment and Safety Method Statements

HSE prepare and issue approved codes of practice (ACOPs). These are documents which are designed to supplement legislation and other guidance issued by the HSE by providing examples of good practice. Although ACOPs have no legal status, they are consulted and taken into account by courts when considering any breaches of the legislation. Failure to follow the guidance given can automatically lead to a finding of culpability, whereas proof that the guidance has been considered may exonerate the employer on the basis that the 'best working practice' was used.

ACOPs, together with advice on risk assessment and safety method statements can be obtained from HSE at the following addresses:

HSE Information Centre  
Broad Lane  
Sheffield  
S3 7HQ  
Tel: 0541 545500  
Fax: 0114 289 2333

HSE Books  
PO Box 1999  
Sudbury  
Suffolk  
CO10 6FS  
Tel: 01787 881165  
Fax: 01787 313995

In addition, the National House Building Council (NHBC) gives advice and assistance to all its members as well as providing draft documentation to assist with the preparation of risk assessments and safety method statements. Non-members can also obtain advice, but will be charged at a higher rate than members for the services supplied. The NHBC are at:

National House Building Council  
Buildmark House  
Chiltern Avenue  
Amersham  
Bucks  
HP6 5AP  
Tel: 01494 434477  
Fax: 01494 728521
Key Questions

- What is the purpose of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999?
  See Introduction.

- Why were the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (S.I. 1994, No. 3140) introduced?
  See Introduction.

- What is a risk assessment and how is it carried out? See What is a Risk Assessment? and How is Risk Assessed?.

- Should risk assessments be reviewed?
  See Step 5: Review the Findings.

- Who should carry out a risk assessment?
  See Introduction and Who is Responsible for Risk Assessment?.

- What is a safety method statement?
  See What is the Safety Method Statement?.

- How is a safety method statement integrated with the health and safety plan?

- Should particularly hazardous work be treated differently?
  See Hazardous Work.

- Where can more information be found?
  See Advice on Risk Assessment and Safety Method Statements.
Troubleshooter

Subcontractors and Risk Assessments

Q. I am a subcontractor employed with my six staff to carry out electrical work on a large site where a retail development is in the process of construction. I have not been given the health and safety plan. As there are a number of subcontractors, as well as the principal contractor, do I have to carry out my own risk assessment?

A. Yes, you must conduct a risk assessment to comply with your personal obligations under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (S.I. 1999, No. 3242). The assessment must be in writing as you have more than five employees. If you have carried out work of a similar nature on another site then you may use that risk assessment, but it must be adapted to take into account any features which are specific to the current site.

You should also prepare a safety method statement explaining how the work will be conducted and the health and safety policy of your firm. This will be incorporated into the health and safety plan to ensure that it does not conflict with any other method statement. See Who is Responsible for Risk Assessment?.

Small Contractors and Safety Method Statements

Q. I am a small contractor and have been asked to supply a safety method statement before commencing work on site. Do I have to do this, I have never used one before?

A. There is no legal obligation on you to use or prepare a safety method statement, however, you must prepare a risk assessment whatever the size of your firm. A safety method statement is recommended by the HSE as it explains how the task will be performed to minimise or eliminate the risks identified in the risk assessment. It is a management tool which should also contain your general health and safety policies. In the event of an accident, the HSE will look to see whether a safety method statement has been prepared and implemented. See What is the Safety Method Statement?.

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Items to Consider when Conducting the Hazard Analysis of a Task

• Where is the task going to take place? If it is at height or in a confined space there are immediate hazards for consideration.

• Will specialised plant and equipment be needed? If so, will the employee using the plant require specialised training or would it be safer for a specialised operator be hired with the plant?

• Will any dangerous substances be used? If so, will special precautions be necessary, such as personal protective equipment?

For further information on using this checklist see 2. Risk Assessment
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