Risk Assessment

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Event organisers have a legal obligation to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health safety and welfare of their employees and others who may be impacted by their activities, such as participants or attendees. In order to meet these obligations, event organisers will need to firstly assess the risks present at or created by the event and then develop and install measures to reduce or remove these risks. This process of risk management often starts with a Risk Assessment.

A risk assessment is a legal requirement of all employers and event organisers, under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and organisers will also be required to put in place arrangements to plan, manage, control, monitor and review preventative and protective measures and for any identified risks to be sufficiently mitigated.

Employers are required to appoint a competent health and safety professional to assist them in undertaking these obligations, in order to ensure they comply with health and safety regulations. If you, or a member of your team, are competent in health and safety then you may wish to carry out the event's risk assessments yourselves. If you do not have the required competence then you must appoint someone to carry out the assessment on behalf of the event.

The Health and Safety Executive defines a "competent person" as, someone who has the combination of training, skills, experience and knowledge and the ability to apply them to perform a task safely. The level of competence required will depend on the complexity of the situation and the particular format and risk of the event.

The Health & Safety Executive advise that a 5-step approach is used to assess and control risks:
1. identify the hazards
2. decide who might be harmed and how
3. evaluate the risk and decide the control measures
4. record the findings and implement
5. review and update if necessary

Once the risks have been identified and evaluated, assessors must determine suitable preventative measures to remove the risk completely or control measures to reduce the risk to an appropriate / minimum level.
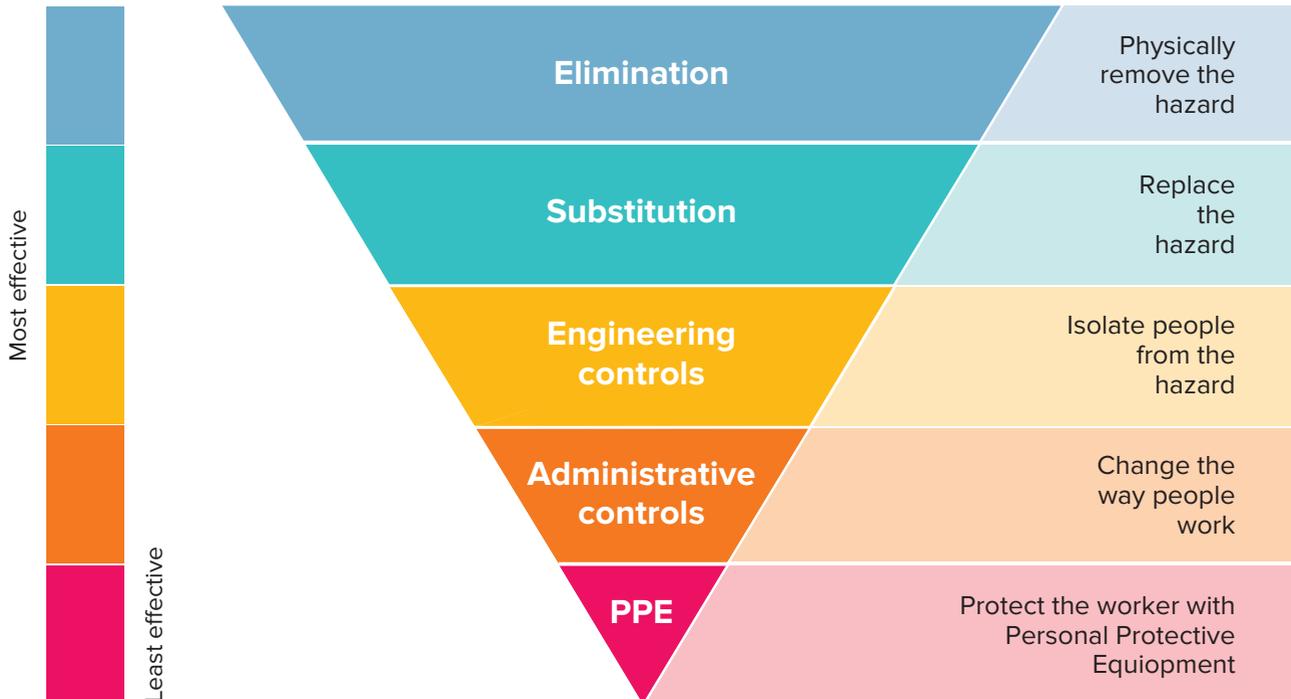
The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 set out the General Principles of Prevention:
(a) avoiding risks
(b) evaluating the risks which cannot be avoided
(c) combating the risks at source
(d) adapting the work to the individual, especially as regards the design of workplaces, the choice of work equipment and the choice of working and production methods, with a view, in particular, to alleviating monotonous work and work at a predetermined work-rate and to reducing their effect on health
(e) adapting to technical progress
(f) replacing the dangerous by the non-dangerous or the less dangerous
(g) developing a coherent overall prevention policy which covers technology, organisation of work, working conditions, social relationships and the influence of factors relating to the working environment
(h) giving collective protective measures priority over individual protective measures; and
(l) giving appropriate instructions to employees

Although the Principles of Prevention set out the legal requirements for preventative and control measures,

many industries and Health & Safety institutions have adopted a hierarchical system often referred to as a Hierarchy of Controls. As detailed on the diagram below this system sets out the most effective to least effective measures and recommends that measures are implemented based on this hierarchy:

Hierarchy of Controls

	Elimination	Physically remove the hazard
	Substitution	Replace the hazard
	Engineering controls	Isolate people from the hazard
	Administrative controls	Change the way people work
	PPE	Protect the worker with Personal Protective Equiopment

Most effective → Least effective

Risk assessments should be carried out during the planning stages of the event to ensure that there is enough time to make any required changes to ensure the event can be delivered safely. Risk assessments will likely change as the event plans develop and should be regularly reviewed and updated in line with any relevant changes to the event plans.

The event organiser should ensure that contractors, suppliers and entertainers, are competent* and have supplied detailed risk assessments, and where appropriate method statements (which detail the specifics of how a task should be carried out) for their activities. Copies of these should be held on file and available upon request and works should be monitored to ensure safe working practises and adherence to the methods as detailed within their method statements.

Guidance on using contractors has been produced by the HSE and can be found here.

When assessing the competency of those contracted for the event organisers should consider their experience at similar events, membership of any governing bodies or industry associations and references from other events. Further information on ensuring the competency of suppliers and contractors can be found here.

Mandatory Condition:
Aberdeen City Council will need to see a copy of the event's risk assessment before approval to hold the event can be given.

Example Hazards

An example risk assessment is provided here and below is a list of common hazards found at outdoor public events.

- slips, trips and falls
- lack of effective communication systems
- poor event management – lack of event planning
- inadequate health and safety procedures of contractors
- vehicle movement within a pedestrian area – collision between vehicle and pedestrian on-site pre, during and post event
- food contamination/poisoning from catering units
- lone working
- severe weather (1. Cold, 2. Rain, 3. High Wind, 4. Hot Weather)
- inadequate emergency arrangements and first aid
- protestors / Demonstrations
- unauthorised access to restricted areas
- alcohol consumption
- missing persons
- threats of violence to staff and members of the public
- work related stress
- temporary electrical installations
- crowd control and safety of spectators – lack of adequate evacuation procedures leading to crowd crushing and associated injuries
- activity (Event Specific-eg. fire juggling, swimming, fireworks)
- falls from height whilst rigging / de-rigging
- object falling from height

Site Inspection

It is important that the measures detailed to reduce or control the risks highlighted at the initial risk assessment stage are implemented, installed, monitored and maintained. Before the event opens to the public, the organiser should ensure that a pre-event site inspection has taken place and that the site is deemed to be safe. It is recommended that event organisers utilise checklists for pre, live and post event inspections as risks are often created due to the influence of factors relating to each phase.

Event organisers are advised to carry out their site inspection leaving enough time to make right any issues before the event is scheduled to open. For events which feature catering or any other licensable activity it is likely that Officers representing Aberdeen City Council will be required to inspect the site before permission can be granted for the event to be opened to the public. It is advised that this inspection is scheduled once the site has been built but again, with enough time to make right any issues before the event is scheduled to open.

For events of scale, it is common for the a mutli-agency site inspection to take place. This will likely involve partners from the Safety Advisory Group who have been involved through the planning phase of the event. All aspects of the event should be continuously monitored in the context of safety throughout including those risks specifically identified at the initial assessment stage or during the pre-event inspection. This responsibility can be shared between the management team or be assigned to an individual who has the competency to do so.

Risks should be addressed upon discovery and it is recommended that a record of this is maintained throughout the event. A simple method would be to take photographs of the risks upon discovery and then again once the risk has been addressed using the methods detailed above.

An example Site Inspection checklist has been included within the Template Event Manual.

Further Reading

The Scottish Government have created Healthy Working Lives which is a platform for encouraging, supporting and advising employers on how to develop safe work environments. The website provides useful guidance on how to create a risk assessment, assess the risks of your workplace and other practical tips on workplace Health & Safety.

Healthy Working Lives – How to carry out a risk assessment

HSE – Risk Management

HSE - Risk Assessment - A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace

HSE – Running an event safely

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