S25 – Opening Statement

Risk Assessment & Safe Systems of Work

Risk assessment is the fundamental process for health and safety management. When investigating accidents and incidents it is nearly always the case that a poor quality risk assessment has been prepared.

Having a simple risk assessment process that is understood by all employees and contractors will have a massive effect on improving health and safety performance.

This procedure gives guidance on the risk assessment process including a simple five by five matrix. Also included are risk assessment and safe system of work templates.

S25 – Risk Assessment & Safe Systems of Work

What is this?

Risk assessment is the fundamental process underpinning successful health and safety management. This written procedure details how to carry out a risk assessment and from that, develop a safe system of work.

The person responsible for implementing this procedure is:

_____

Why do we have to complete work activity risk assessments?

Risk assessments will identify the significant hazards and the control measures required to prevent accidents and ill health arising in the workplace. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 place a duty on employers to undertake risk assessments.

When should risk assessments be carried out?

Either an Employee Risk Assessment or a Site Specific Full Risk Assessment is required for any task to be performed or for any equipment to be used.

Note: This is particularly important if new plant or equipment is utilised on a site.

Previously completed risk assessments must be reviewed to ensure they are still valid before they are used.

What does the responsible manager need to do?

The person responsible for implementing this procedure must ensure that:

- ➔ Suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out on site;
- ➔ A list of all tasks requiring a risk assessment is compiled (task identification register).

Note: It is vital to involve key personnel on the site (foremen, fitters, electricians, operatives) when developing the list

- ➔ Everyone involved in the task contributes to the risk assessment to ensure it is based on practical shared perception and that everyone is aware of the outcome of the assessments.

Note: It is advisable that more than one person is involved in undertaking a risk assessment.

How should a risk assessment be carried out?

An informed judgment is made on whether an Employee Risk Assessment is sufficient or whether a Site Specific Risk Assessment is required. If good, effective levels of control are being used then an Employee Risk Assessment is probably sufficient. If it is identified that either no or few controls are in place, or the task involves significant risk then a Site Specific Risk Assessment is required.

Employee Risk Assessment – **All employees** must be competent to undertake an Employee Risk Assessment. Before starting a task the employee must take one minute to consider what they are about to do. A simple record is then completed and sent to their **line manager**. This will be used to determine whether a Site Specific Risk Assessment is required.

Site Specific Risk Assessment – It is the responsibility of the **line manager** to ensure that a Site Specific Risk Assessment is carried out whenever necessary. They must ensure that the Site Specific Risk Assessment is carried out by a competent person who has been trained to complete this task. The assessment must be pre-planned and must involve the key personnel performing the task.

How should a site-specific risk assessment be completed?

1. Identify the task or work operation(s) to be assessed.
2. Record all of the information required by the heading section of the form.
3. Identify the relevant hazards and list them (column 1).
4. Identify and record the relevant hazard effects (column 2).
5. Identify the persons who may be at risk from those hazard effects (column 3).
6. Identify the existing control measures that are in place to control the risk of each hazard effect (column 4).
7. Take into account the severity (column 5) and likelihood (column 6) of each hazard, and using the risk level indicator to determine the risk rating, record whether it is Red, Amber or Green (column 7).
8. If additional controls are required to control or reduce the risk, this must be recorded (column 8).
9. Set a date for the completion of the actions identified (column 9) with the agreement of all relevant parties.
10. Record the residual risk when any new controls are put into place (column 10). This must be green for the task to start.
11. Finally, the risk assessment needs to be signed off by the responsible manager as an endorsement that the task has been suitably assessed as controlled, and that it is safe to start the activity.

Safe System of Work — What is this?

A safe system of work is a step-by-step method of carrying out a task that considers the hazards and risks involved and clearly states the control measures required.

The site-specific risk assessment will determine whether a safe system of work is required.

The safe system of work must be completed using the template.

The safe system of work must:

- ➔ Clearly state the task it covers;
- ➔ Highlight the major hazards;
- ➔ Detail the steps to safely complete the task (including means of isolation, who can undertake the task, how it is supervised, emergency controls, PPE requirements etc);
- ➔ Be provided to all employees who are to undertake the task.

All relevant staff must be made aware of the requirements of the safe system of work prior to the task being undertaken.

A record of the issue of a safe system of work must be kept on an individual's training file.

When should risk assessments be reviewed?

The **line manager** must review and repeat the above whenever there is a significant change to either the working method, equipment used or competence of the persons doing the job, or any other factor that may materially affect the existing assessment.

The risk assessment and safe system of work should be reviewed immediately the task has been undertaken to ensure they were successfully followed, but it is imperative that it is reviewed prior to the work being undertaken again.

The **line manager** must ensure that where work practices remain unchanged, all risk assessments are reviewed and, if necessary, revised at intervals not exceeding two years.

An initial and date at the bottom of the risk assessment form indicates a review has been completed.

Note: 'Review' does not necessarily mean re-write; complete the review in a different colour pen to highlight any changes.

Risk level indicator

Likelihood / Severity		Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost certain
		1	2	3	4	5
Trivial injury or near hit	1	1	2	3	4	5
Minor injury or major near miss	2	2	4	6	8	10
Injury requiring medical treatment	3	3	6	9	12	15
Lost time injury	4	4	8	12	16	20
Major injury or death	5	5	10	15	20	25

Risk rating

High 15–25 High Risk: Unacceptable — the task cannot start or must be stopped immediately. Inform **senior management**

Moderate 6–14 Moderate Risk: Caution — the task cannot start or must be stopped immediately. Consult with site management to seek authorisation

Low 1–5 Low Risk: Acceptable — the task may start or continue. Monitor controls

Risk assessment flow chart