

RISK ASSESSMENT

FACT FILE



Every event and every setting is different, and every risk assessment has to be site specific. This factfile can therefore only be a starting point for your own health and safety planning to try to prevent personal injuries and is not intended to be exhaustive.

You should also carry out separate assessments for fire risks and property damage / theft so that you can plan appropriate precautions where necessary.

For further information, please consult your local Environmental Health Officer or the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/index.htm>

Risk assessments are a MUST. But let's take one step at a time...

What is a risk assessment?

'Risk assessment' means examining carefully what might cause harm and subsequently deciding on the precautions that are in place, or need to be. The aim of any risk assessment is to identify risks and take suitable and sufficient measures to minimise the likelihood of any harm or damage occurring.

What is a hazard? Some definitions

You need to distinguish between:

Hazards = Something with the **potential to cause harm**

Risks = The **likelihood** and the **severity of the harm**

For example:

A wet and slippery surface clearly constitutes a hazard that could lead to injury. The risk associated with the hazard is that passers-by could slip, hurt their back or head, or break an arm or leg.

The following factors can help evaluate the nature, likelihood and degree of harm that might arise from a hazard:

- The history of previous accidents
- The number or type of people who will pass or could come into contact with the hazardous feature.

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Why carry out risk assessments?

Everyone who organises events or manages places that attract members of the public needs to have a system for managing health and safety to anticipate, monitor and control potential risks.

As a Heritage Open Days organiser who opens a building to the public or stages an activity, you must carry out a risk assessment before the event. As the insurer of your property or activity will want to see proof of your assessment in case of an accident and ensuing claim, you also need to keep a written record of this assessment.

To ensure that you qualify for the Heritage Open Days insurance terms and conditions, carry out a risk assessment of your property or planned activities before registering with Heritage Open Days. Then review and apply it before and during the event.

Examining and preventing risk simply makes sense. It may take up some of your time during the preparatory stages, but could spare you a lot of hassle later on.

How to proceed? Five steps of risk assessment

According to the HSE there are five simple steps you should follow:

STEP 1: Look for the hazard

Try to see your property or event location with a stranger's eye. Visualise what could happen to someone who is not familiar with the location and look out for any physical features or objects that could lead to accidents or overcrowding. These may include:

- Steep steps / Fall from height
- Uneven or slippery flooring
- Low ceilings / beams and other possible obstructions
- Dead ends and locked gates
- Convergence of several routes into one

STEP 2: Decide who might be harmed and how

Identify your potential visitor groups (e.g. children, elderly people, people with special needs etc.) and what obstacles and hidden hazards they may encounter when visiting your building or participating in your event.

When thinking of hazards and risks, consider both physical as well as behavioural aspects. For example, young children who are less aware of hazards and move quickly are particularly in danger of hurting themselves, while partially-sighted people will need extra bold signage in order to find their way safely through your property. Rough surfaces could cause difficulties for people with inadequate footwear, so you may want to recommend in the event directory or your posters that stout shoes should be worn.

But whoever your visitors are, they all have in common that they are not familiar with the layout, the circulation routes and facilities of the property or location. This unfamiliarity itself constitutes a hazard.

STEP 3: Evaluate risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done

Once you have identified the hazards and the risks associated, it is often not too difficult to come up with some appropriate precautions and control measures.

In taking action, start by asking yourself:

- a. Can I get rid of the hazard altogether? And if not;
- b. How can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely and not a high risk?

The HSE website provides advice on appropriate control measures or you can seek the assistance of a competent qualified Health and Safety practitioner. Once you have identified the hazard risk you need to implement the appropriate control measure or precaution you have noted as eliminating or reducing those risks. Examples of possible measures include the following:

- Closing all areas or restricting access to areas that could be dangerous
- Signposting hazards and providing warning information for visitors regarding particular features along the route
- Posting and training sufficient volunteers to point out features on the visitor route, to direct visitors appropriately and take charge in an emergency
- Operating a strict non-smoking policy
- Providing emergency escape that is safe and effective for all

Other practical measures could include:

- Checking your First-Aid kit is fully stocked
- Making sure there is a telephone/fully charged mobile on site

STEP 4: Record your findings and implement them

Keep a written record of your assessment; it will remind you and others of particular hazards and precautions and is a requirement of the insurance cover.

The best way of recording your assessment is in the form of a table where you note down:

1. The hazards to health and safety you have identified
2. The potential risks that may arise from them to volunteers, staff and members of the public
3. Existing precautions
4. The degree of risk you have achieved through these precautions
5. Any additional measures you feel you need to take to lower the risk further

The Heritage Open Days registration essentials include a risk assessment form, which you can use if you wish. One the back of this form you will also find two risk assessment examples adapted from actual Heritage Open Days events.

Once you've completed your form, don't lock it away and forget about it. It's an action plan and as part of its implementation you need to brief all members of staff and volunteers about hazards, precautions and emergency strategies.

STEP 5: Review your assessment and revise if necessary

It is good practice to repeat and update your assessment whenever there is a change to your premises or the set-up of your event.

Conditions can change on the day, e.g. you're overwhelmed by high visitor turn-outs or rain makes a path slippery. So, be prepared to reassess your safety measures during your event too.

And in case of an accident?

It's worth remembering that it's almost impossible to eliminate all risk and the law recognises this. In most cases it doesn't take much to ensure that people are protected from harm. But if something happens despite your best efforts, what then?

Record all incidents in an accident book or sheet, and notify the insurer and the Heritage Open Days office as soon as possible.

Your record should capture facts, not opinions and note down who was harmed how and where. If there are eye witnesses, take their contacts. And don't forget to take some pictures.

Don't forget – be prepared!

Emergency plan for evacuation

Some basic guidance on fire safety risk assessments is available in form of a simple 5-step guide and checklist, downloadable from the www.gov.uk website: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/14899/fsra-5-step-checklist.pdf

For further information about fire risk assessments and emergency plans, please visit:

- Your local County Fire and Rescue Service website, which provides a lot of up-to-date and local fire safety information, or
- Fire Kills, the official Facebook page for the UK Government's Fire Kills communications campaign, from where you can download a range of useful leaflets: <http://www.facebook.com/firekills>

You should also put in place an emergency action plan. For example, consider what if a fire was to break out during the event.

You may like to consider briefing your helpers and volunteers on things such as the following:

- How will people be warned if there's a fire (e.g. electric fire alarm)
- How the evacuation of the property will be carried out and the routes that will need to be taken
- What fire fighting equipment is stored where
- Who will have any specific responsibilities including how the Fire Brigade or any other necessary emergency services are called and who will liaise with them
- What arrangements are in place to ensure the safe evacuation of different types of people

Thought about food? Some notes on food hygiene

If you plan to offer cakes and refreshments during Heritage Open Days, you need to be aware of food safety requirements and regulations. Depending on the scale of your event and your catering activity, you may need to apply for a Food Hygiene Certificate. It's best to check with your local Environmental Health Officer.

You will also find guidance on food hygiene, the latest food safety regulations and a lot more useful information - including how to list allergenic ingredients - on the Food Standards Agency's website www.food.gov.uk

Alcohol and entertainment licensing

If your event includes the sale of alcohol, music, dancing or other dramatic performances, you may need to apply for a Temporary Event License. Interpretations vary locally. So to be on the safe side, check with the Licensing department at your Local Authority. Don't leave it to the last minute. Factor in at least four weeks to apply for a license if this turns out to be necessary.

For more information about licensing, visit the Home Office's website <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/drugs/alcohol/alcohol-licences/>