



## BFAWU GUIDE TO RISK ASSESSMENT

What is Risk Assessment?

It may sound complex, but in actual fact Risk Assessment is a fairly simple concept to understand. It is the identification of hazards and an estimation of the risks involved.

If the hazard is properly identified and the likelihood of it causing harm to workers or others is fully assessed, then we are in a much better position to put into place the prevention or control measures needed.

The BFAWU safety representatives have used their knowledge of assessing risks to ensure their members work in safer and healthier working environments.

Our safety representatives have helped to develop better safety cultures and have fought for and won greater resource input into health & safety, for the good of the whole workforce.

Our safety representatives are fully trained to identify hazards wherever they may be, not just in the area in which they work.

Risk Assessments, can be summed up by using the Five Step System:

Step 1. Look for and list the hazards (Hazard= The thing likely to cause harm).

Step 2. Decide who might be harmed and how (Risk= The likelihood of it happening).

Step 3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether or not existing protective measures are adequate or if more needs to be done (This is the Risk Assessment).

Step 4. Ensure that the findings are documented.

Step 5. Ensure that the assessment is reviewed at regular intervals and revised if there are changes to working practises, always taking into account the capabilities of the individual.



There are many different ways of carrying out the risk assessment and there is no perfect way that fits all eventualities, but whatever method is used it must be suitable and sufficient.

Clearly, more detailed assessment systems must be used where there are greater levels of risk. Ask your employer what systems they have used and make sure that you understand the system. Remember, you have the right to question how the assessment has been done and the assumptions it has reached. Safety Reps' can challenge the assessment if they believe there are shortcomings in its findings.

It should be remembered that risk assessing is not an exact science and you can only get out of them what you put in. Dependent on what information is put in will determine what result comes out.

There are major differences between assessments based on Quantitative (Fact based, statistical) information and those based on Qualitative (Subjective, Personal judgement) data, and we need to know the difference. What is presented, as "acceptable risk" may not be acceptable to those actually facing that risk?

Remember safety representatives have the right to examine Risk Assessments and should do so.

For more information contact Head Office.