Risk Assessment Guidance

Doing a risk assessment will help you to protect yourself and other people who could me harmed by activities that you're planning. It involves looking at what could cause harm and checking you've taken the necessary precautions.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommends five steps to risk assessment

Step 1 – Identify the Hazards
Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how
Step 3 – Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
Step 4 – Record your findings and implement them
Step 5 – Review your assessment and update if necessary

Remember:

- A hazard is anything that may cause harm, e.g. chemicals, electricity, working from ladders or an open drawer
- Risk is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these hazards, with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

Step 1- Identify the hazards

First you need to work out how people could be harmed.

- Visit www.hse.gov.uk for practical guidance on where hazards happen and how to control them.
- Walk around the event venue / area / course and look at what could cause harm.
- Ask advice of other volunteers or the venue owner, who may notice things that are not immediately obvious to you.
- If you're using any equipment, check the manufacturer's instructions for information about any hazards and risks involved.
- Remember to think about long-term health hazards too, e.g. high levels of noise.

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard, be clear about who could be harmed so you can decide on the best way to manage the risk.

- Identify groups of people rather than individuals, e.g. suppliers, members of public, volunteers.
- Consider how each group might be harmed, e.g. volunteers may suffer back pain from lifting marquees.
- Some points to remember:
    - Some groups have particular requirements, e.g. young or disabled people, pregnant women.
    - Some people may not be at the event all the time but could still be harmed by activities, e.g. suppliers, spectators, members of the public.
    - Anyone sharing the event venue may be affected by your activities.
    - Consider how people may be harmed during the set up and breakdown of the event.

Step 3 – Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Having spotted the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about them. The law requires you take reasonable steps to protect people from harm.

- Look at what you're already doing, how you are doing it and what controls you have in place.
- Consider whether you can remove the hazard altogether or how you can control risks so that harm is unlikely.
- When controlling risks, apply the principles below, if possible in the following order:
    - Eliminate the risk (e.g. by hanging decorations at a lower level so there is no work at height)
    - Try a less risky option (e.g. change the route of a run to avoid a busy road)
    - Isolate the hazard by preventing access (e.g. putting a cage around a generator)
    - Reduce exposure to the hazard (e.g. put barriers between pedestrians and traffic)
    - Issue personal protective equipment (e.g. clothing, footwear, goggles etc)
    - Provide welfare facilities (e.g. first aid and washing facilities).

Step 4 – Record your findings and implement them

Use the risk assessment template provided and keep it simple, e.g 'Hazard = tripping over rubbish. Control = bins provided, regular checks to be made'.

Show that:

- you've done a proper check to identify a full range of hazards
- you considered who might be affected
- you dealt with all the significant hazards, taking into account the number of people that could be involved
- your precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low.
- Record actions to deal with any improvements you need to make.
- Make regular checks to ensure you keep your control measures in place.
- Ensure there are clear responsibilities, i.e. who will lead on what action, and by when.
- Prioritise and tackle the most important things first, i.e. the hazards that could cause most harm.

Step 5 – Review your risk assessment and update if necessary

Events may change during the planning and on the day. You may add new activities, locations or equipment and new hazards may present themselves.

- So you need to review your risk assessment to make sure it stays up to date.
- It's a good idea to set a review date before your event and to do another review on the day of the event, adding in any updates or changes.