

SAFETY AT EVENTS - RISK ASSESSMENTS

Safety at Events - Risk Assessments

No matter what size your event is, risk assessments are a worthwhile exercise – and in many cases, they're a legal requirement. A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what at your event could cause harm to people, so you can weigh up whether you need to take steps to lower the risk.

If your event is in a regular venue (such as a community hall or nightclub), it's possible that the management will have their own risk assessment, but you may still want to complete your own because the hazards may be different for your particular event.

Risk assessments are not difficult to do – you just need to be aware of these terms:

Hazard – this is anything that has the potential to cause harm (e.g. electricity, obstacles, crowds, food).

Risk – this is the chance that someone could be harmed by the hazards you identify. The risk can be low, medium or high.

We recommend doing your risk assessment in two stages: start by considering the general hazards, then go on to specifically address the fire hazards.

General Hazards

All risk assessments follow the same five steps, which are outlined below. For small events, you can use Bath & North East Somerset Council's Sample Risk Assessment template on this website; assessments for larger events can follow the same pattern but you may need more space to go into sufficient detail.

Step 1 – Spot the hazards

Plan your event on paper, then think about the hazards relating to the individual activities and any equipment that will be used. If you can, it helps to walk around the venue as you do this. It's a good idea to get another person to do the same thing – they may spot things that you have missed. Think about:

- Slipping, tripping or falling hazards (e.g. loose carpets, unsecured cables)
- Moving parts of machinery (e.g. fairground rides)
- Any vehicles driving onto site
- Electrical safety (e.g. use of any portable electrical appliances)
- Manual handling activities (e.g. members of staff or volunteers moving heavy items)
- Poor lighting, heating or ventilation
- Hazards created by specific activities (e.g. fire risk from cooking demonstrations)
- Storing and serving food (e.g. chilled items being left out of the fridge for too long)
- Any other hazards that you may find

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard identified, list all those who may be affected and how they may be harmed. Don't list individuals by name, just list groups of people. For example:

- Stewards
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Vendors, exhibitors and performers
- Members of the public
- Expectant mothers
- Wheelchair users
- People with certain medical conditions (e.g. photosensitive epilepsy)
- Deaf people and people with visual impairments
- Children and older people

Step 3 – Work out the risks and decide whether to take extra precautions

For each hazard, write down the precautions that are already in place to minimise the risk of someone being harmed. For example, if there are cables running across the floor, are they already secured so people won't trip over them?

Taking into account any existing precautions, decide whether the risk for each hazard is high, medium or low. For example:

High: An unsecured bouncy castle being used by young children in adverse weather conditions.

Medium: A display of animals in a roped off area.

Low: A band performing on a raised stage.

For each risk, consider whether it can be eliminated completely. If it cannot, then decide what must be done to reduce it to an acceptable level. Consider whether you can do any of the following:

- Remove the hazard all together, e.g. by prohibiting vehicles from driving on site during the event.
- Prevent access to the hazard, e.g. using barriers to prevent people getting close to a tall stack of speakers.
- Use personal protective equipment, e.g. giving members of staff earplugs if they will be exposed to loud music.
- Find a substitute for that activity/machine etc., e.g. hiring a different bouncy castle – one which can be safely secured to the ground.
- Take any other steps to reduce the risk level of the hazard, e.g. using stewards to manage audience numbers and prevent overcrowding.

- Arrange for qualified first aiders to be present during the event. There is specific guidance on the provision of first aid at large or major events on this website.

Step 4 – Record your findings

Make sure you record all your findings from steps 1 – 3. For small, low risk events, you can refer to the Sample Risk Assessment template. Larger events will require a more detailed record but can follow a similar structure.

Step 5 – Review and revise

It's likely that the risk factors will change and new hazards will present themselves during the planning stage, so you should treat your risk assessment as a work in progress and regularly review it, making amendments where necessary.

Fire Risk Assessments

A fire risk assessment is a legal requirement - the person responsible for the event must make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks.

The planning issues for an event, site or venue can be considered in a number of stages:

The ‘build up’: venue design, selection of workers, selection of contractors and subcontractors, construction of the stages, marquees, fencing

The ‘load in’: safe delivery and installation of equipment and services which will be used at the event, e.g. stage equipment used by the performers, lighting, and the protection of crew

The ‘event’: effective fire safety during the event

The ‘load down’: safe removal of equipment and services

The ‘breakdown’: control fire risks once the event is over and the infrastructure is being dismantled

The risk assessment that you must carry out will help you to ensure that your fire safety procedures, fire prevention measures, and fire precautions (plans, systems, and equipment) are all in place and working properly. The risk assessment should identify any issues, examples of which are listed below, that need attention:

- Cooking and catering appliances and equipment, including barbecues
- Storage & use of LPG, petrol etc
- Smokers materials, e.g. cigarettes, matches and lighters
- Camp fires/bonfires
- Electrical, gas or oil-fired heaters (fixed or portable)
- Hot processes, e.g. welding by contractors, blacksmiths
- Faulty or misused electrical equipment
- Light fittings and lighting equipment, e.g. halogen lamps or display lighting
- Hot surfaces and obstruction of equipment ventilation, e.g. generators

- Naked flames, e.g. candles or gas or liquid-fuelled open-flame equipment
- Flares, fireworks and pyrotechnics
- Deliberate ignition (e.g. arson, vandalism)
- Refuelling
- Natural phenomena (e.g. lightning)

Small and medium events can use the Fire Risk Assessment template on this website. Larger events can use the Avon Fire and Rescue template (see link on the Event Organiser's Toolkit page of this website). Their website has lots of useful information about fire risk assessments, including links to specialised guides for the type of venue where your event will be taking place. There is also a guide to fire risk assessments at open air events and venues.

The steps are similar to before:

Step 1 – Spot the hazards

Identify:

- Sources of ignition
- Sources of fuel
- Sources of oxygen

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how

Identify:

- People in and around the premises
- People especially at risk

Step 3 – Work out the risks and decide whether to take extra precautions

Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk:

- Evaluate the risk of a fire occurring
- Evaluate the risk to people from fire
- Remove or reduce fire hazards
- Remove or reduce the risks to people

Think about:

- Detection and warning
- Fire-fighting
- Escape routes
- Lighting
- Signs and notices
- Maintenance

Step 4 – Record your findings

Record, plan, inform, instruct and train:

- Record significant finding and action taken
- Prepare an emergency plan
- Inform and instruct relevant people; co-operate and co-ordinate with others
- Provide training where necessary

Step 5 – Review and revise

Keep the assessment under review and revise where necessary.