

Section 4: Risk Assessment Guidelines

Introduction

Part of the role of the club is to produce a Club **Risk Assessment**. This is nothing more than a careful examination of what could cause harm to the members (or property, equipment etc) involved. The aim is to see if the **Hazard** is significant and whether you have it covered by satisfactory precautions so that the **Risk** is small.

The process is generally referred to as “**Risk or Safety Management**” and is much easier than most people imagine.

It initially involves some simple measures: -

- Look for the Hazards (**What is the problem?**)
- What is the chance of something happening? (**the Risk**)
- What can we do about it? (**The Control Measures**)
- Record the findings. (**Write it down**)

Legal Requirements – why?

1. The primary aim of a Risk Assessment is to avoid harm to health, and to promote the safety and welfare of all involved. This could be Club members, the general public, or persons who you might come into contact with while engaged in your sport or activity.
2. We must comply with the legal requirements that are enforced through acts of Parliament and European Directives. It’s the law!
3. At all costs, everyone wishes to avoid liability, both in terms of criminal prosecutions and civil claims and the provision of a Risk Assessment shows good practice. Most National Governing Bodies of Sport endorse the requirements of clubs for a Risk Assessment.

The Process - what?

- Most areas of life involve some exposure to “**Hazards**” (the potential to cause harm).
- When people play sport or take part in outdoor activities, exposure to hazards will inevitably vary.
- It therefore goes without saying that the “**Risks**” (the likelihood of harm actually happening) can in certain sports and circumstances be high!

- As a Club Committee, it is not just your moral responsibility but also legal responsibility to ensure that the club activities and all that they entail, are as safe as “**reasonably practicable**”.
- The Risk Assessment is used as a guide for the Club to develop “**Control Measures**” with the view to hopefully **eliminating** the risk altogether.
- If this cannot be done, then the risks must be **reduced** to an “**acceptable**” level.
- The benefits of having a written Risk Assessment are that Hazards are identified and control measures are documented which will reduce the likelihood of accidents occurring. The Risk Assessment can be used as evidence in possible cases of litigation.
- There are many ways to portray the information, but it is important that the procedure is kept **simple** and that the “**whole picture**” is taken into account!

It is important that the Risk Assessments are specific to your sport not only training, but Cuppers Events, Varsity, BUSA, Tours, Social Events etc.

There are a number of explanations needed in order to understand the process and the form used in this example;

1. “Hazard” - *Anything that has the **potential** to cause harm?*

- The environment (weather).
- Hazards within the game that you play.
- Your equipment.
- Travel to and from matches.
- The facility e.g. poor lighting, slippery floors, blocked fire exits etc

This list is exhaustive and will vary from indoor to outdoor sports and according to the level of coaching and/or experience of the club members etc

2. “Control Measures already in place” - *what is all ready in place that has reduced the chance of somebody being harmed by the hazard?*

Some possible measures are as follows although the list is endless.

- Specialist training for Club Officers.
- Special safety equipment for the Sport.
- Club Compliance Briefings at the start of the year.
- NGB Guidelines e.g. rules, use of referees, good practice guidelines etc.
- Qualified and Insured Coaches.
- Insurance for club members.

3. “Risk Factor” - *What is the likelihood that something could happen?*

For the purpose of the Club Risk Assessments we can use:

E.g. **High** - could occur quite easily.

Medium - could occur sometimes.

Low - unlikely, although conceivable.

If clubs wish to use a different ‘marking’ system then you need to have a key for the ‘Risk Factor’. Risk Factors include: Likelihood x Severity = Risk Factor . ‘Likelihood’ states how likely it is for a Hazard to happen and ‘severity’ refers to the outcome of the event and can range from a minor injury, to major injury to possible fatality. At the end a ‘Risk Factor’ is arrived at which will alert you to the need for further control measures.

4. **Further Control Measures** - *What more can you reasonably do to reduce the likelihood of an accident happening?*

- Try a less risky option or another way of doing things.
- Provide or undertake additional training.
- Purchase specialist equipment.
- Carry out ‘safety briefings’ with all members.
- Provide clear procedures for club members to follow Etc

5. **Record your findings** - *Write it down.*

- Aim to keep the Risk Assessment to a reasonable level. If the document is twenty pages long then no one would read it, and therefore it would be ineffective. However, if “key points” have been missed, then the process would also be ineffective!
- The most effective way of completing this process is for the Club Committee to work as a group. Discuss what problems you have faced in the past, how where they dealt with? What other Clubs have had problems and how did they deal with them. Are there other sports or activities similar to your own whom face the same problems as yourselves, can you share your ideas?
- Does your NGB provide any information on the subject? Has your Coach or Instructor undertaken any type of work like this before, could they help you?
- The “Risk Assessment” **must be reviewed annually**. Ideally when the new Committee takes over. Risk Assessments should be forwarded on from Committee to Committee and then published on the webpage on a ‘Safety documents or club documents’ link.

- If circumstances change significantly within the operation of the Club during the year or there has been an incident that has raised some concerns, then the “Risk Assessment” must be amended accordingly.
- Your Risk Assessment does not need to be signed by club members however your Code of Conduct (Declaration Section) does and this is to be handed in to the ASO once the Risk Assessment and Codes of Conduct have been approved.
- If you have ‘other’ information available from the National Governing Body or other recognised sources for your sport, please feel free to add these to your webpage to explain how the Risk Assessment works in practice.
- **Please remember to pass on the information to your new committee and explain the ‘process’**

For further information on how to complete a Risk Assessment please refer to the Health and Safety Executive Webpage guidelines: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>