

Inspections

Workplace Hazard Spotting

Health and safety management and the elimination or reduction of health risks begins with the identification of workplace hazards. There are three important ways to identify hazards: Reports, task analysis and inspections.

Reports and records of accidents, incidents and illness

Accident reporting systems are only useful if workers use them. Accidents will not be reported if management uses a "blame culture" which penalises the reporting of accidents by workers.

Sickness reporting that is locked into "managing for absence" or other disciplinary procedure is useless for managing safety because the reality of workplace illness will be skewed by under-reporting.

Incident or "near-hit" reporting needs to be simple otherwise workers will not use it. Forms that are complex and take time to complete will not be used. Systems based on "who, what, where, when" are simple and can be completed immediately after the incident.

Task analysis

Many hazards to do with work tasks have been identified through work studies, ergonomic studies and other research. The risks to health of working with this or that chemical, lifting and moving patients, working at a computer etc. are fully documented.

To use task analysis, simply break a worker's job down into the variety of work tasks that must be done to complete the job. e.g. an office worker's job might involve computer use, accessing and using file records, use of the phone, photocopying or stock/supplies movement. Risk reduction methods are comprehensively documented and freely available.

Task analysis is especially useful in pinning down those elusive "hidden hazards", headaches arising from eye strain for example.

Inspections

Check-lists are useful when doing an inspection but have two inherent problems. Firstly, the check-list may not cover all the potential hazards of a particular workplace and, if the inspection is confined to the check-list, some sources of injury will not be identified or monitored. Secondly it is very easy to see the check-list as the extent of the inspection. It is not. Workers at risk are the reason for the inspection and they should be queried about their health and any improvements to their work area that they want to see.

Safety Inspection Check List

Inspection details

Work area:

Safety Rep:

Date of current inspection:

Date of previous inspection:

Consultation

- ▲ Have any changes been made?
- ▲ Are safety reps. consulted in good time about any changes?
- ▲ If there is a safety committee, have agreed changes been completed?
- ▲ If there is no safety committee do workers want one?
- ▲ Are there sufficient safety reps?
- ▲ Do safety reps have access to good facilities, resources and information?
- ▲ Is the safety poster visible and completed e.g. The safety rep and the contact details of the enforcement office are detailed.

Training

- ▲ Do all workers get sufficient training to do their job safely?
- ▲ Is refresher training given frequently enough?

- ▲ Are young and other inexperienced workers adequately trained and supervised?
- ▲ Have safety reps had up-to-date trade union training in health and safety?

Accidents

- ▲ Have all accidents and "near-hits" been recorded in the accident book?
- ▲ Have all illnesses and ailments caused by work been reported and investigated?
- ▲ Did safety reps investigate all accidents, "near-hits" and work related ill-health reports?
- ▲ Were risk assessments reviewed in the light of accidents, "near-hits and ill-health"?

Chemical and biological hazards

- ▲ Are there harmful substances or pathogens (bacteria/germs) in the work area?
- ▲ If yes, have risk assessments (Control of substances hazardous to health – COSHH) been carried out and safety precautions put in place?
- ▲ Have exposed workers had information and training on safe working with these substances?
- ▲ Are chemicals clearly labelled and safely stored?
- ▲ Is health surveillance carried out where it is needed?
- ▲ Are workers trained in the emergency procedure in case of dangerous occurrence e.g. spillage?

Manual handling and repetitive strain injuries

- ▲ Have you identified the workers who are expected to move loads or do repetitive tasks?
- ▲ Have risk assessments been done for manual handling activities and repetitive work?
- ▲ Have workers been trained and given information on safe manual handling methods?
- ▲ Are mechanical lifting aids

appropriate for the task? Are they regularly used, inspected and maintained?

- ▲ Are workers complaints of strain injury or other aches and pains recorded in the accident book and investigated by the safety rep?

The working environment

- ▲ Is the temperature comfortable; are thermometers positioned at work areas?
- ▲ If the temperature is causing discomfort has an assessment been carried out?
- ▲ Is lighting adequate?
- ▲ Are stairs and escape routes adequately lit?
- ▲ Are work-surfaces, walls and floors kept clean and tidy?
- ▲ Are floors and walkways non-slip and free for slip/trip hazards?
- ▲ Are ventilation systems regularly maintained and inspected?
- ▲ Is there adequate supply of fresh air with no draughts?
- ▲ Do people have to speak loudly to make themselves heard?
- ▲ If the workplace is noisy, has a noise risk assessment been carried out?
- ▲ Are there enough clean toilets for men and women, are they in good repair?
- ▲ Are washing facilities available e.g. hot water, soap, towels and sanitary disposal?
- ▲ Is there a rest room away from the working area with adequate seating where workers can eat or drink?
- ▲ Are there rest room facilities for pregnant workers or breastfeeding mothers?
- ▲ Are there enough trained first aiders and/or appointed persons to cover all work areas?

- ▲ Do workers know how to contact first aiders and do they know where the first aid box is kept?
- ▲ Are first aid boxes fully equipped, how often are they inspected and who is responsible for replenishing them?

Work equipment and electrical hazards

- ▲ Is there dangerous machinery in the work area?
- ▲ Are the safety mechanisms and guards in place and working?
- ▲ Is machinery, other work appliances and electrical equipment regularly maintained and tested?
- ▲ Have all staff been trained to use, clean and adjust equipment safely?
- ▲ Are there procedures for reporting faulty equipment and taking it out of use?
- ▲ Is access to live equipment restricted to authorised persons?
- ▲ Are "lock-offs" functioning?

Workplace transport safety

- ▲ Is it safe for pedestrians and drivers in the location; has this been assessed and reviewed?
- ▲ Are walkways and roads properly segregated, maintained and repaired?
- ▲ Are speed limits in force and adhered to?
- ▲ Are workers properly trained and certified to operate moving equipment?

Fire safety

- ▲ Are fire escape routes and exits kept clear at all times?
- ▲ Do staff know what to do in the event of fire; are fire escape drills held at least twice a year?
- ▲ Are fire alarms tested weekly and can they be heard throughout the workplace?

- ▲ Are a sufficient number of suitable fire extinguishers provided?

Stress, violence and bullying

- ▲ Are risk assessments carried for these three hazards?
- ▲ Are procedures in place that reduce the possibility of workers being harmed by these hazards?
- ▲ Do workers have access to independent support if they experience any of these hazards at work?

Risk assessments

- ▲ Are there up-to-date risk assessments for all work?
- ▲ Other work issues requiring risk assessment
- ▲ Working with vibrating tools – Is the rate of vibration safe? How is the risk of injury reduced?
- ▲ Pregnant workers – Are there fumes, substances or activities that could harm the unborn child?
- ▲ Display screen equipment – is it properly designed and comfortable?
- ▲ Personal protective equipment – is it freely available, is it cost free and is it effective and stored correctly?
- ▲ Staff security – Are there lone workers? Are there workplace areas where workers are vulnerable?
- ▲ Asbestos – Is there an up-to-date register, have you inspected the places on site where asbestos could be released?
- ▲ Confined spaces – are the correct procedures followed for work in these areas, is there an adequate supply of oxygen.

Lastly

- ▲ If you have identified any problems discuss them with colleagues, plan what can be done and who will do it.

Factsheets online www.lhc.org.uk London advice 020 7794 5999



Hampstead Town Hall Centre
213 Haverstock Hill, London NW3 4QP
Tel: 020 7794 5999 Fax: 020 7794 4702
Email: mail@lhc.org.uk Website: www.lhc.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 293677



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