



Five Steps to Risk Assessment

This leaflet is based on HSE guidelines adapted for RYA Recognised Teaching Establishments.

1 This leaflet is intended to help Principals of RYA Recognised Teaching Establishments to assess risks in their schools.

2 An assessment of risk is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in your school, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. The aim is to make sure that no one gets hurt or becomes ill. Accidents and ill health can ruin lives, and affect your business too if output is lost, equipment is damaged, insurance costs increase, or you have to go to court.

3 Don't be put off by some of the words used in this guide.

- Hazard means anything that can cause harm (e.g. weather conditions, safety boat propellers etc)
- Risk is the chance, great or small, that someone will be harmed by the hazard

4 The important things you need to decide are whether a

hazard is significant, and whether you have it covered by satisfactory precautions so that the risk is small. You need to check this when you assess the risks. For instance, electricity can kill but the risk of it doing so in an office environment is remote, provided that live components are insulated and metal casings properly earthed.

How to assess the risks in the school

5 Don't be overcomplicated. In most schools the hazards will be obvious to an experienced sailor. Checking them is common sense, but necessary. You will already have assessed some of them - for example, you know that the most obvious hazard to students is drowning, so you will have worked out policy on the use of safety harnesses, lifejackets or buoyancy aids and safety host cover. If so, you can consider them 'checked', and write that down if you are making a written assessment. For other hazards, you probably already know whether you have equipment that could cause harm, or if there is an awkward slipway or pontoon where someone could be hurt. If so, check that you have taken what reasonable precautions you can to avoid injury.

6 If you are a small school and you are confident you understand all aspects of it, you can do the assessment yourself. If you are a larger school, you could ask a responsible employee, safety representative or safety officer to help you.

If you are not confident, get help from a competent source (see paragraph 19). But remember - you are responsible for seeing it is adequately done.

STEP 1 LOOK AT THE HAZARDS

7 If you are doing the assessment yourself, walk around the school, sail around your sailing area and look afresh at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Ignore the trivial and concentrate only on significant hazards which could result in serious harm or affect several people. Ask your Instructors and staff what they think. They may have noticed things which are not immediately obvious. Manufacturers' instructions or datasheets can also help you spot hazards and put risks in their true perspective. So can accident and ill-health records.

STEP 2 DECIDE WHO MIGHT BE HARMED, AND HOW

8 Those most obviously at risk are your students but do not forget Instructors and staff. Include members of the public, or people who share your sailing area, if there is a chance they could be hurt by your activities.

STEP 3 EVALUATE THE RISKS ARISING FROM THE HAZARDS

AND DECIDE WHETHER EXISTING PRECAUTIONS ARE ADEQUATE OR MORE SHOULD BE DONE

9 Even after all precautions have been taken, usually some risk remains. What you have to decide for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low. First, ask yourself whether you have done all the things that the law says you have got to do. For example, there are legal requirements on prevention of access to dangerous parts of machinery. Then ask yourself whether generally accepted sailing and windsurfing standards are in place. But don't stop there - think for yourself, because the law also says that you must do what is reasonably practicable to keep your working environment safe. Your real aim is to make all risks small by adding to your precautions if necessary. More information about legal requirements and standards can be found in the HSE publications Management of Health and Safety at Work: Approved Code of Practice and Essentials of Health and Safety, details of which are given at the end of this leaflet.

10 Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents, or putting some non-slip material on slippery steps, are inexpensive precautions considering the risks.

11 If you find that something needs to be done, ask yourself

(a) Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?

(b) If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

Do not attempt artificially to remove hazards that are inherent in sailing. To do so would be pointless because your students would then finish their course totally unprepared for the hazards they will encounter in the real world.

12 If the work you do tends to vary a lot, or if you or your employees move from one site to another, select those hazards which you can reasonably foresee and assess the risks from them. After that, if you spot any unusual hazard when you get to a site, get information from others on site, and take what action seems necessary.

13 If you share a workplace, tell the other employers and self-employed people there about any risks your work could cause them, and what precautions you are taking. Also, think about the risks to your students, instructors and staff from those who share your site.

STEP 4 RECORD YOUR FINDINGS

14 If you have fewer than five employees you do not need to write anything down, but if you have five or more employees you must record the significant findings of your assessment. This means (1) writing down the more significant hazards and (2) recording your most important conclusions - for example, Electrical installations: insulation and earthing checked and found sound, or Fumes: from laminating in repair shop: local exhaust ventilation provided and regularly checked. You must also inform your employees about your findings.

15 There is no need to show how you did your assessment, provided you can show that:

- a proper check was made,
- you asked **who** might be affected,
- you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved,
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low.

Assessments need to be suitable and sufficient, not perfect.

The real points are:

- **Are the precautions reasonable, and**
- **Is there something to show that a proper check was made?**

16 Keep the written document for future reference or use; it can help you if an inspector questions your precautions, or if you became involved in any action for civil liability. It can also remind you to keep an eye on particular matters. And it helps to show that you have done what the law requires. There is a form with this guide which you may find helpful but, by all means, produce your own form if it suits you

better.

17 To make things simpler, you can refer to other documents, such as manuals, RYA publications, the arrangements in your health and safety policy statement, company rules, manufacturers' instructions, and your health and safety procedures. These may already list hazards and precautions. You don't need to repeat all that, and it is up to you whether you combine all the documents, or keep them separately.

STEP 5 REVIEW YOUR ASSESSMENT FROM TIME TO TIME AND REVISE IT IF NECESSARY

16 Sooner or later you will bring in new equipment, hosts and procedures which could lead to new hazards. If there is any significant change, you should add to the assessment to take account of the new hazard. In any case, it is good practice to review your assessment from time to time.

Don't amend your assessment for every trivial change, or still more, for each new job, but if a new job introduces significant new hazards of its own, you will want to consider them in their own right and do whatever you need to keep the risks down.

Getting help

19 It is a legal requirement to assess risks. In the unlikely event that you get stuck on the assessment, your local health and safety inspector can advise you on what to do. You will find most of what you need to know about legal requirements and standards in:

Essentials of Health and Safety at Work
ISBN 071760716 X, £5.95

but you might also find the following useful:

Management of Health and Safety at Work:
Approved Code of Practice, L21. 1992
Price £5.00, ISBN 0 7176 0412 8

Our health and safety policy statement, 1990 (rev)
Price £3.00, ISBN 0 7176 0424 1

COSHH. A brief guide for employers IND(G)136(L), 1993
Free

Getting to grips with manual handling: a short guide for employers
IND(G)143(L) 1993 Free

Personal Protective Equipment at Work: Guidance on Regulations, L25, 1992
Price £5.00, ISBN 0 7176 0415 2

Display Screen Equipment Work: Guidance on Regulations, L26, 1992
Price £5.00, ISBN 0 7176 0410 1

Whose risk is it anyway? Video (includes audio tape and literature) available from CFL Vision, P0 Box 35, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7EX 1992
Price £12.98 while stocks last

The publications listed above (except the video) may be obtained from:

HSE Books, P0 Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6FS Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 Alternatively, priced publications may be obtained from a number of booksellers.

