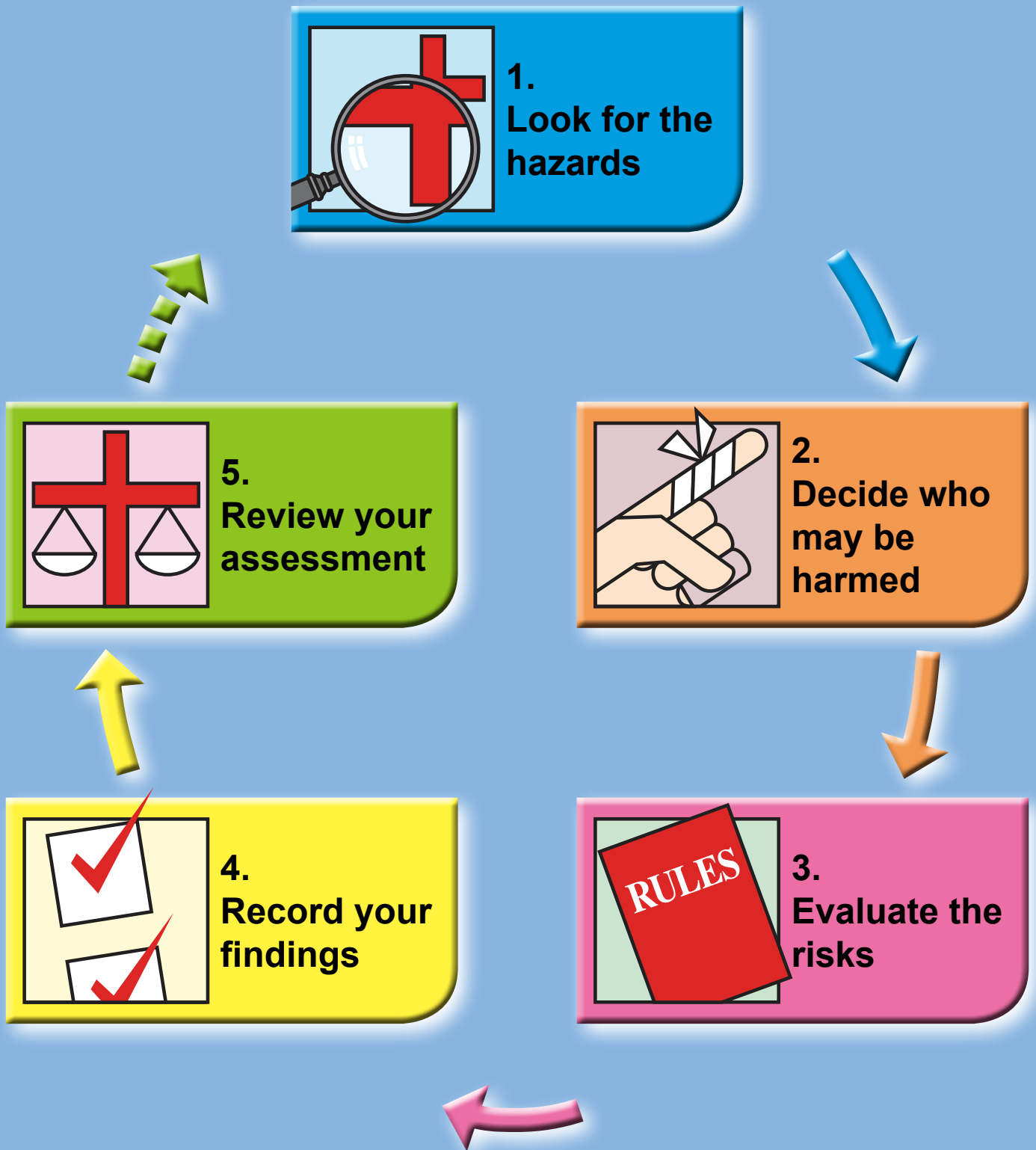


Five steps to risk assessment



FIVE STEPS TO RISK ASSESSMENT

1. This leaflet is intended to help employers assess and control risks at work. It is aimed at firms in the commercial, service and light industrial sectors.
2. A risk assessment is a careful examination of what, in your workplace, may cause harm to employees, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken suitable precautions or should do more to prevent harm. It aims to control the risks and manage the occupational safety and health in your workplace. Accidents and ill health can cause fatalities and affect your business due to loss of production, machinery damaged, suspension of work, additional medical and insurance costs, etc.
3. 'Hazard' means anything that can cause harm (for example, chemicals, electricity, work-at-height, and so on); and

'Risk' is the chance, high or low, that someone will be harmed by the hazard.
4. The important things you need to decide are whether the hazard is significant, and whether you have it covered by suitable precautions to minimise the risk. You need to check this when you assess the risks.

How to assess risks in workplaces

5. Don't be overcomplicated. You may have already assessed some of the risks. You probably already know if there is machinery that may cause harm, or if there is an awkward entrance or a stair where someone can be hurt. If so, check if you have taken suitable precautions to avoid injury.
6. If you run a small firm and you are confident you understand the work, you can do the assessment yourself. If you run a larger firm, you can find a competent employee, safety representative or safety officer to help you.

But remember, you should engage the employees concerned to make the assessment and should ensure it is adequately done.



LOOK FOR THE HAZARDS

If you are doing the assessment yourself, walk around your workplace and look afresh at what is reasonably be expected to cause harm. Ignore the trivials and concentrate only on significant hazards that can result in serious harm or affect several employees. Ask your employees or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious. Manufacturers' instructions or data sheets as well as accidents and ill-health records can also help you spot hazards and put risks in their true perspective.



DECIDE WHO MAY BE HARMED, AND HOW

You have to assess risks to the occupational safety and health of anyone who may be affected by your activities, including yourself, employees and even people who may not be in the workplace all the time, for example cleaners, visitors, maintenance workers, and so on. Some employees, such as pregnant and disabled employees, may have particular needs.

Step 3



RULES

EVALUATE THE RISKS ARISING FROM THE HAZARDS AND DECIDE WHETHER EXISTING PRECAUTIONS ARE SUITABLE

Even after all precautions have been taken, usually some risks may still remain. What you have to decide for EACH SIGNIFICANT HAZARD is whether the level of the remaining risk is high, medium or low.

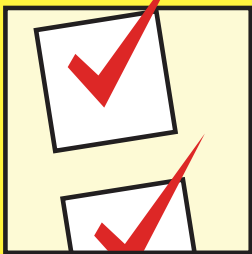
FIRST, ask yourself whether you have done all the things that the law says you have got to do.

THEN ask yourself whether generally accepted trade standards are in place. Your real aim is to eliminate or minimise all risks by taking appropriate precautions. If you find that something needs to be done, ask yourself:

- Can I GET RID OF THE HAZARD altogether?
- If not, how can I CONTROL THE RISKS in the priority of SUBSTITUTION, ENGINEERING CONTROLS, ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS OR PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT, so that the harm is unlikely?
- Does the proposed control CREATE ANOTHER HAZARD?

IF THE WORK YOU DO TENDS TO VARY A LOT, OR IF YOU OR YOUR EMPLOYEES MOVE FROM ONE WORKPLACE TO ANOTHER, select those hazards that you CAN REASONABLY FORESEE and assess the risks from them. After that, if you spot any unusual hazard when you get to a workplace, get information from responsible employees on-site, and take suitable precautionary measures.

Step 4



RECORD YOUR FINDINGS

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 "Fume from welding: local exhaust ventilation provided and regularly checked". You must also inform your employees about your findings.

THERE IS NO NEED TO SHOW HOW YOU DID YOUR ASSESSMENT, provided you can show that:

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

Keep the written document for future reference or use. It can remind you to keep an eye on particular matters and it helps to show that you have done what the law requires.

To make things simpler, you can refer to other documents, such as manuals, the arrangements in your occupational safety and health policy statement, company rules, manufacturers' instructions, and your occupational safety and health 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 RISK ASSESSMENT FROM TIME TO TIME IF NECESSARY


Sooner or later you will bring in new machinery, substances and procedures that could lead to new hazards. If there is any significant change, you should add to the assessment to take account of the new hazard. But it is good practice to review your assessment from time to time, in particular, whenever there are improvements you need to make, significant hazard spotted or lessons learnt from accidents or near misses. There is no need to amend your assessment for every trivial change or even for each new job except any significant new hazard induced.


Enquiries and Complaints

Enquiries

If you wish to enquire about this leaflet or require advice on occupational safety and health (OSH) matters, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Branch of Labour Department (LD) through:

 Telephone : 2559 2297 (auto-recording service available outside office hours)

 Fax : 2915 1410

 E-mail : enquiry@labour.gov.hk

Information on the services offered by LD and on major labour legislation is also available on our website at www.labour.gov.hk.

For details on the services offered by the Occupational Safety and Health Council, please call 2739 9000.

Complaints

If you have any complaint about unsafe operations and environments at workplaces, please call the LD's OSH complaint hotline at 2542 2172 or fill out and submit an online OSH complaint form on our website. All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.



Online OSH Complaint Form