

Principles

Did you know that...

Employers are, at least morally, obliged to provide, and to maintain, systems of work that are, as far as reasonably practicable, safe and without risk to any person's health.

An outline of the process to follow in developing a modern safe system of work is as follows:

- Make a risk assessment
- Determine what can be done so far as is reasonably practicable to remove the identified hazards and do it
- Should hazards remain, develop a safe system of work
- Where necessary formalise these systems of work into procedures
- Include in the procedures where necessary the use of permits to work coupled with physical lock-off systems
- Monitor the observance of all parts of the procedure. Feed-back any information on weaknesses or failures in the system
- Rectify these by modifying the system
- Keep monitoring and modifying the systems as necessary.

UK legislation and implementation

Under Section 2(2)(a) of the Health and Safety At Work etc. Act 1974 employers are legally obliged to provide and to maintain systems of work that are, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risks to health.

Further information on risk assessment, legal requirements and standards can be found in the following HSE publications (available on their website <http://www.hse.gov.uk>):

- Leaflet "Risk Assessment" IND(G) 163(REV 4)
- Leaflet "Five steps to risk assessment - case studies" HSG 183
- The health and safety toolbox HSG268 <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg268.htm>
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Approved Code of Practice and Guidance 2nd Ed. L21 ISBN 0 7176 24889

IET Health and Safety briefings on Permit to Work Systems and Electricity in the Workplace are also relevant:

- <http://www.theiet.org/factfiles/health/hsb33-page.cfm>
- <http://www.theiet.org/factfiles/health/hsb34a-page.cfm>

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