

Example risk assessment for maintenance of flats

Setting the scene

The residential managing agent, employed by the landlord, carried out the risk assessment at this block of flats. The block, built in the 1930s, has communal gardens and separate garage blocks, with asbestos cement roofs. It is a three-storey block with 12 flats and two central stairways with landings.

A caretaker, who lives offsite, carries out general maintenance, small repairs and cleans communal areas. The gardens are managed by an independent contractor. Larger, planned maintenance is contracted to specialist companies.

As the premises were built before 2000 the building was surveyed for asbestos when acquired by the owner. Asbestos-containing materials found in the survey were recorded, a copy of the survey is kept in the caretaker's office and the managing agent holds a duplicate copy to send out to contractors tendering for work.

How was the risk assessment done?

The managing agent followed the guidance in HSE's *Five steps to risk assessment* (www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm).

1 To identify the hazards, the managing agent:

- looked at HSE's web pages for small businesses (www.hse.gov.uk/business/index.htm), and the

websites of other bodies, for example the Association of Residential Managing Agents at www.arma.org.uk, to learn where hazards can occur;

- made clear who was responsible for what under the terms of the lease or tenancy agreement. This was especially important for issues such as asbestos management, gas safety, pressurised equipment, replacement of carpets;
 - walked around the property, noting things that might be dangerous and taking HSE's guidance into account;
 - talked to the caretaker and other staff (including the contractors) about their work to learn from their knowledge and experience, and to listen to their opinions about health and safety issues in the workplace;
 - talked to the preferred suppliers of maintenance work, to ensure that their activities didn't pose a risk to other site staff, contractors and residents, or vice versa; and
 - looked at the accident book, to gain an understanding of previous incidents.
- 2 The managing agent then wrote down who could be harmed by the hazards and how. He also took the method statements and risk assessments that contractors had issued for specific jobs and, if they were acceptable, incorporated these into this assessment.
- 3 He wrote down what controls, if any, were in place to manage each hazard and compared these to the good practice guidance on the HSE website. Where existing controls were not considered good enough, the managing agent wrote down what else needed to be done to control the risk.

Important reminder

This example risk assessment shows the kind of approach a residential managing agent might take. It can be used as a guide to think through some of the hazards in your business and the steps you need to take to control the risks. Please note that it is not a generic risk assessment that you can just put your company name on and adopt without any thought! This would not satisfy the law – and would not be effective in protecting people.

Every property and business is different – you need to think through the hazards and controls required in your business for yourself.

- 4 Putting the risk assessment into practice, the managing agent decided and recorded who was responsible for implementing the actions identified as necessary and when they should be done. When each action was done, he ticked it off and noted the date. He also made it part of the induction process for new staff and new contractors.
- 5 The managing agent discussed the findings of the risk assessment with the caretaker, all contractors, and with the residents. A copy was pinned-up in the building so everyone who lived and worked in the property could see it. The assessment would be reviewed and updated every year, or straightaway if there were any major changes to the property or contract arrangements.
- 6 Most of the actions fell to the managing agent, but where the landlord, caretaker and others had responsibilities, he wrote to them so that everyone knew what they had to do.

Company name: Smith's Consultants

Date of risk assessment: 01/10/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Fire	Employees, contractors, residents and public may suffer serious, possibly fatal, injuries from smoke inhalation, burns, structural collapse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Full fire risk assessment, as per www.fire.gov.uk/workplace+safety has been done and is available in the manager's office. ■ Checks to ensure all control measures in fire risk assessment are in place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fire doors closed/self-closing. – Emergency lighting installed. – Extinguishers, eg in plant rooms, serviced and inspected. – Exits marked and usable. – Suitable arrangements made if exit routes to be obstructed for short-term works, eg use of access equipment. 	■ No further action needed.			
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review if any significant change or at least once a year 	Managing agent	Ongoing and annually	4/10/07
Working at height	Serious injury or even fatality if someone fell from height.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All work carried out by in-house staff or contractors will adopt the following approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Work at height avoided wherever possible, eg windows cleaned using pole device. – Boards used to guard stairwells, stair openings, safe working practice when using stepladders on landings, ie steps side to ascending stair side etc. – Ladders and stepladders only used for low-level, short-duration work (less than 30 minutes). Ladders are tied off whenever practical – if this is not possible, they are secured in another way, eg wedged against a wall or footed. – Only ladders and stepladders that are Class 1 or EN 131 used. – Periodic and pre-use checks done. ■ Longer-duration and riskier projects to be carried out by experienced, professional contractors using adequate safe working systems. ■ Contractor to produce risk assessment and method statement (RAMS) for acceptance by the managing agent. Examples of working at height controls include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – External work and work on staircases carried out from most appropriate access equipment for location of work, eg suitable scaffold, tower, cherry-picker or scissor lift by suitably trained staff. – Crawling boards used when working in roof spaces or on fragile roofs. – Adequate edge and leading edge protection, fall protection systems (eg harness and lanyard systems with suitable anchor systems) to be used and maintained by competent contractors. – Balustrades checked for signs of damage/corrosion and repairs carried out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check that all operatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – are trained in the safe use of any equipment; and – know how to carry out pre-use ladder check. 	Managing agent	At periodic staff meetings	12/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reiterate that use of ladders is a last resort and only for short-duration, low-level work. 	Managing agent	At next staff meeting	12/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check condition of all ladders stored. Check training for new staff taking on managing agent role to be able to accept risk assessment and method statements (RAMS). 	Managing agent	At next site visit	23/10/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Slips, trips and falls on the level	Employees, contractors, residents and others might suffer sprains, fractures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff wear safety/sensible shoes with good grip. ■ Condition of floors, stairways and paths checked and damaged surfaces signed and repaired as soon as possible. ■ Doormats etc provided for wet weather, and checked regularly. ■ 'Clear up as you go' policy adopted and enforced – all equipment, cleaning materials etc to be cleared away as soon as job completed. ■ Warning signs for wet floor and other hazards, eg 'work in progress' or 'beware trailing cables'. ■ Cordless tools used wherever possible, if tools or machines have trailing cables then nearest socket to workpoint used and cones/signs put out. ■ Lighting illuminates all walkways and stairs and is checked regularly by visiting caretaker – blown lamps etc replaced immediately, other faults reported to on-call electrician for repair as soon as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inspection of common parts for unauthorised additions, eg cycles. 	Managing agent and caretaker	Every scheme visit	23/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Slippery stone surface near rear entrance treated with anti-slip covering. 	Managing agent	Within one month	24/10/07
Electrical	Maintenance staff/residents and visitors may suffer shock and burns injuries from faulty electrical equipment or installation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fixed installation (inspected by a competent person according to a planned inspection programme, and maintained as necessary): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Residual current device (RCD) built into main switchboard/ RCD plug provided when RCD protection not available, instructions for operators to test RCD before use; and/or low-voltage (110 v) equipment used by contract staff. – Ensure electrical equipment in supply intake rooms visually complies with BS 7671. – Restrict access to supply intake rooms. – Ensure all cut-out fuses etc are properly sealed. – Arrange to move pre-payment meters out of supply intake rooms. – Regular inspection of supply intake rooms. ■ Equipment supplied by landlord: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Portable appliances, eg vacuum cleaners, floor polishers, drills, sanders etc subject to annual PAT testing. – Operatives told to inspect all electrical appliances pre-use and not to bring any equipment on site where condition of cables, switches etc gives cause for concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure pre-payment meters are not in supply intake rooms 	Landlord or managing agent	Six-monthly	26/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ PAT testing 	Contractor or managing agent	Annually	16/11/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Hazardous substances Cleaning fluids and bleach	Staff, residents and visitors risk getting skin problems such as dermatitis, and eye damage, from direct contact with bleach and other cleaning chemicals, eg solvents and detergents. Vapour may cause breathing problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Long-handled mops/brushes, and appropriate gloves, provided and staff trained in their use. ■ All staff trained in the risks, use and storage of cleaning chemicals and wear personal protective equipment as instructed. ■ Cleaning 'chemicals' marked irritant' substituted, where possible, for milder alternatives. ■ Cleaning machines designed to minimise handling of cleaning chemicals. ■ Cleaning contract to include health and safety instructions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff reminded to report any health problems they think may come from cleaning, and to check for dry, red or itchy skin on their hands. 	Managing agent	Every scheme visit	23/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff reminded to wash gloves and aprons after use. 	Managing agent	Every scheme visit	23/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review of storage of cleaning materials on site if allowed. 	Managing agent	Every scheme visit	23/10/07
Hazardous substances Pesticides	Staff, residents and visitors may suffer ill health from exposure to pesticides that are harmful substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Only pesticides approved for the specific purpose used. ■ All safety instructions on label followed – application method, protective equipment, exclusion periods. ■ All users have received appropriate training including certificate of competence for professional horticultural/amenity use or relevant NVQ for non-agricultural purposes. ■ Pesticides stored in a locked, bunded, metal cupboard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure that any operatives have received appropriate training and qualifications. 	Managing agent	Ongoing	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure that contractors who store pesticides on site have up-to-date list available. 	Managing agent	Ongoing	
Hazardous substances Asbestos-containing materials (ACMs)	Staff, contractors and residents at risk of inhaling asbestos fibres where the asbestos-containing materials are disturbed, ie cut or broken, or are allowed to deteriorate and break down.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Management plan in place that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – identifies where there might be asbestos; – notes the condition of the materials; – records in a plan where the ACMs are found; – has 'Danger, asbestos, do not disturb' signs; – is checked every 12 months to ensure condition of ACMs have not deteriorated; – advises on legal requirements for using licensed contractors for particular works and other precautions for disposal of waste materials, protective equipment etc. ■ Plan and information on condition of ACMs passed to all contractors, updated annually or when issues arise. ■ ACMs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – in good condition and unlikely to be disturbed are recorded and signed; – with minor damage are repaired/encapsulated and monitored; – in poor condition or having been disturbed are removed by an appropriately trained, equipped and specialist contractor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check with contractors if they will recommend work that could disturb ACMs. Discuss possibility of altering job to avoid disturbing ACMs or budget to have them properly removed prior to work commencing. 	Managing agent	One month	29/10/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Diseases See also 'Waste management, sharps etc' below	Caretaker, garden and other contractors' staff may become infected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All staff instructed in good hygiene practice to reduce the risk of infection, gloves and other protective clothing and footwear provided. ■ Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease) – rodents eliminated/controlled by professional contractor (see 'Waste management, sharps etc' below). ■ Tetanus – all staff to have up-to-date immunisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check that staff have up-to-date tetanus vaccination. 	Managing agent	One month	29/10/07
Legionella bacteria growing in the hot and cold water systems that service the whole property	Staff, contractors and residents who use common hot and cold water supply, particularly vulnerable people such as children and the elderly (water systems within flats, not connected to hot and cold systems, are responsibility of individual owners/tenants).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Specialist contractor employed to undertake risk assessment and draw up action plan, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – hot and cold water systems (regular sampling and disinfection); – boiler (calorifier) etc operated and maintained to manufacturer's specification; – thermostats checked to maintain temperatures; – hot water stored above 60 °C and the system designed to provide a return temperature of 50 °C or above to the calorifier (much higher temperatures avoided to prevent scalding); – cold water kept below 20 °C; – hot and cold taps (when not used), run for 10 minutes every week to prevent water stagnating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check boiler temperature, ie storage at 60 °C or above and sufficient to keep water distributed above 50 °C. 	Managing agent	Monthly	29/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hot water temperature should be at least 50 °C within a minute of running the water. 	Managing agent	Monthly	29/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cold water temperature should be below 20 °C after running the water for up to 10 minutes (check monthly). 	Managing agent	Monthly	29/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify any redundant pipework for removal. 	Managing agent	One month	29/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have redundant pipework removed. 	Managing agent	Six weeks	29/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify pipe runs that can be shortened to prevent stagnation of water and improve efficiency of hot water distribution. 	Managing agent	One month	29/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Monitor water temperatures to check system operating and to decide if further controls needed, eg warning signs or thermostatic mixer valves – to avoid scalding risk. 	Managing agent	Monthly	29/10/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Waste management, sharps etc	Problems of health risks and pests if bin room not kept clean and chute becomes blocked. Stab and infection risk from sharps, used syringes etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Wheeled bins pulled around to front to allow easy access for residents. ■ Bin room kept locked to prevent unauthorised access, eg by children, and residents have pass 'key' to bolt lock and told to keep the room locked. ■ Area set aside, away from walkways, for large items unsuitable for chute – access arrangements for refuse collection. ■ Bin room swept and washed every two weeks by caretaker. ■ No hazardous waste to be disposed of through general waste. ■ Specialist pest-control contractor manages rodent traps, fly and insect control. ■ No known problem with contaminated sharps, but sharps kit provided to caretaker in case of isolated incidents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reiterate in annual residents' newsletter that it is the residents' responsibility to dispose of hazardous waste (including fluorescent lighting etc) through a licensed service. 	Managing agent	Next issue	15/11/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Put up sign reminding residents to lock bin room after use. 	Managing agent	One month	29/10/07
Manual handling	Staff and residents receiving back, neck and limb injuries from lifting heavy loads, eg refuse items for disposal, deliveries of cleaning materials etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All heavy and awkwardly shaped items, eg refuse sacks, identified. ■ Caretaker trained in how to move and handle items, eg lifting properly, pulling trolleys, bins etc instead of pushing, ■ Trolley and sack truck provided for moving items, eg refuse sacks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regular reminders that the caretaker should not attempt to lift and move items they feel are too heavy. Loads should be broken and trolley/truck provided used. 	Managing agent	Every six months at contractor meetings, ongoing for individual meetings.	12/10/07
Violence and threatening behaviour	Staff may suffer assaults, threats and abuse from residents, visitors and trespassers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Manager has good liaison with local police to alert them and receive information about potential problems. ■ Clear chain of responsibilities for repairs etc so caretaker can pass on any residents' complaints. ■ Staff trained to walk away from incidents and summon help. ■ Staff report incidents of abuse etc to manager for discussion and support. ■ Caretaker has mobile phone to summon help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider panic alarm, depending on advice from police, caretaker's feelings about risk, eg frequency of trespassers or criminals. 	Managing agent	Within three months	8/11/07
Working alone	Caretaker may experience stress and/or injury from verbal abuse or assault from trespasser's, or others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Buddy system in place to ensure that caretaker has returned safely. ■ Good relationships with residents – caretaker usually lets residents know that he is on site and working. ■ Caretaker has mobile phone to summon help if unable to get to landline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider panic alarm after assessing risk of violence. 	Managing agent	Within three months	8/11/07

Assessment review date: 29/09/08