Risk Assessment: Being safe

There are lots of different ways that people use to judge how safe places, activities or materials are. One of these is the calculation approach. For each potential hazard, an assessor gives a score out of 5 for how likely the risk is, and how severe the consequences might be should it happen. These scores are multiplied to give a risk score.

Likelihood	Severity
Rating 1 = Very unlikely	Rating 1 = No injury/impact
Rating 2 = Unlikely	Rating 2 = Minor injury/impact
Rating 3 = Likely	Rating 3 = "3 day" injury/impact
Rating 4 = Very likely	Rating 4 = Major injury/impact
Rating 5 = Almost certain	Rating 5 = Fatality, disabling injury, etc

Risk

Likelihood \ Severity	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	2	3	4	5
2	2	4	6	8	10
3	3	6	9	12	15
4	4	8	12	16	20
5	5	10	15	20	25

Manageable risk Requires Review Unacceptable risk

Example calculation:

A possible hazard was that if a fire started outside the staffroom it could have spread all along the corridor to the front desk. This would obviously be very severe and could have caused fatalities, so would be given a rating of 5. The risk that this could happen was quite likely because of the open corridors and the paper display boards. Therefore, it would be given a likelihood score of 3. These scores then have to be multiplied together to reach a total risk score:

5 x 3 = 15 15 is in the red zone: an **unacceptable risk**

Once a hazard has been identified, steps can be taken to reduce the risk. In this case, fire doors have been located at various points along the long corridor. While this hasn't affected the severity of consequences of a fire, it has reduced the risk of it spreading so far so that it is very unlikely. The new likelihood score is therefore 1, and creates a new overall risk score of 5 (1x5). This is now a manageable risk.
Note: This doesn't mean that there is no risk; it just means that the risk is safe enough to be managed by the usual safety procedures: fire alarms, drills, etc.

When carrying out an assessment of risks, it is useful to record it in a table so that everyone can see how the risk has been reduced, and to identify if any more actions need to be taken.

Hazard	Likelihood Score	Severity Score	Overall Risk Score	Actions already taken to reduce risk	Further actions recommended
Fire spreading along main corridor	*1*	*5*	*5*	*Automatic fire doors fitted, alarms fitted, extinguishers in corridors.*	*Regular fire drills*

Once the risk assessment has been carried out, it may be necessary to take further action to reduce the risk to an acceptable level, and then to update the risk assessment document to reflect the changes.

It is very rare that any environment or activity can be free of risk. However, the risk assessment process can help us to judge which risks are greatest, and to reduce risks to the level that can be easily managed by sensible safe behaviour. We use this practice all the time, from crossing the road, to driving a car.

Safety is not about removing risk; it's about acting as safely as possible to reduce it.

Risk Assessment Template

Location: _____ Responsible Person(s): _____ Date: _____

Hazard	Likelihood Score	Severity Score	Overall Risk Score	Actions already taken to reduce risk	Further actions recommended
e.g. Fire spreading along main corridor	*1*	*5*	*5*	*Automatic fire doors fitted, alarms fitted, extinguishers in corridors.*	*Regular fire drills*