

Example risk assessment for cold storage warehousing

Setting the scene

Frozen Foods Ltd provide cold storage and distribution facilities (at temperatures between -18° and -30°C) at three locations. They serve customers of all sizes across a variety of sectors. Each location has 10 000 pallet spaces, uses fixed and mobile racking, and averages a throughput of 2500 pallets a week.

Twenty people are employed in the warehouses, working a variety of shifts. Three members of staff are from an Eastern European country; only one speaks good English. At busy times, temporary staff from an employment agency may also be employed.

The site manager did the risk assessment, which covers goods inward from the gate to the cold store, their storage and their despatch.

How was the risk assessment done?

The manager followed the guidance in *Five steps to risk assessment* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg1103.pdf).

1. To identify the hazards, the manager:

- looked at HSE's web pages for free health and safety advice and guidance for the warehousing industry (www.hse.gov.uk/warehousing/index.htm), and at HSE's *Warehousing and storage: a guide to health and safety* (available from HSE Books, www.hsebooks.com/ or 01753 681165), particularly the chapter on temperature controlled storage.

Figure 10.1 Risk assessment: cold storage warehousing

- walked around all the areas where the staff, contractors, customers and others may go, noting things that might pose a risk and taking HSE's guidance into account.
 - talked through the issues with the safety representative, including how knowledge of risks and risk controls could effectively be communicated to the two staff members who did not speak good English, and on health and safety training for agency staff.
 - talked to the two company first-aiders, to see if the health surveillance questionnaires they compile and distribute have thrown up any additional issues that need to be considered;
 - talked to supervisors and other members of staff to learn from their detailed knowledge of particular jobs and areas and to discuss whether safe working procedures should be developed for certain jobs; and
 - looked at the accident book to gather information on past problems.
2. The manager then wrote down who could be harmed by the hazards and how.
3. For each hazard, the manager wrote down what controls, if any, were in place to manage these hazards, and compared the controls to the good practice guidance on the HSE website. Where he did not consider existing controls good enough, he wrote down what else was needed to control the risk.
4. The manager discussed the findings with the safety representative. Then, to implement the findings of the risk assessment, the manager decided who was

responsible for each of the actions that were needed, and by when each action should be done. He wrote this down and, when each action was completed, ticked it off and recorded the date. The manager told staff about the risk assessment at a team meeting. The Eastern European member of staff who speaks good English translated for his countryman, and checked that they understood it. The manager pinned up a copy of the risk assessment in the staff room, and made it part of the induction process for new staff.

5. The manager decided to review and update the assessment at least once a year or at any time when major changes to the workplace occurred, such as the introduction of a new plant or process.

Important reminder

This example risk assessment shows the kind of approach a small business might take. Use it 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 wholesale without any thought. This would not satisfy the law – and would not be effective in protecting people.

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

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Company name: **Frozen Foods Ltd** Date of risk assessment: **5/10/07**

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
Extreme cold Accidental lock-in in the cold store	Employees and others may suffer death or serious injury from prolonged exposure to cold temperatures if accidentally locked in the cold store.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to the store restricted to authorised, trained persons only. "No-entry" signs clearly posted. Emergency exit provided, door fitted with strip heaters to ensure it does not freeze. Emergency lighting provided (mains powered, battery back-up). Daily check an emergency exit door to ensure it is not frozen shut. Emergency exit door instructions posted on illuminated board by exit. Two trapped worker alarms (battery operated, mains back-up) next to both exits. Supervisor ensures thorough check of building before it is locked. Alarms and emergency lighting regularly tested/maintained by competent person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check instructions remain clearly visible. 	Supervisors	04/10/07	First check done 04/10/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodic checks to ensure clear access to emergency exit maintained, and that door is operational. 	Supervisors	04/10/07	02/10/07
Extreme cold Working in a sub-zero environment	Employees may suffer ill health or injury (eg frostbite) from prolonged exposure to sub-zero temperatures (particularly those with certain pre-existing medical conditions). Extreme cold may also lead to gradual loss of awareness of risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-employment health screening by a responsible person. Regular health surveillance by trained, responsible persons. System for referring to an occupational health professional staff where health, following surveillance, is possibly being affected by cold work. Staff trained in risks of cold store working and to recognise symptoms of cold stress. The right personal protective equipment (according to advice in HSE guidance and suppliers' recommendations) issued and staff trained in its use. Supervisors ensure PPE is worn. Only authorised, trained staff allowed in the cold store. Staff have regular warm-up breaks. Drying facilities for wet PPE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff reminded to regularly check their PPE for wear and tear, to ensure it remains effective. 	Manager	04/10/07	04/10/07

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