

Safety Corner

What are the common pitfalls in risk assessment?

Below is a list of don'ts in risk assessment that we should avoid:

- Failure to identify all relevant key-risk hazards associated with a particular activity
- Failure to consider all possible outcomes of a hazard and their respective likelihood
- Assessing the risk of a hazard by considering only the worst-case outcome
- Only considering the risk from one activity or hazard rather a holistic view of the situation
- Not linking hazards with risk controls
- Applying risk control that is not commensurate with the risk impact of the hazard
- No consideration of further risk reduction measures that could be taken
- Attempting to reduce or eliminate all hazards instead of reducing their risks
- Inappropriate use of risk criteria
- Inappropriate use of data or use of generic data instead of site-specific data
- Inappropriate definition of a representative sample of events
- Confusing the concepts of a hazard, harm, and risk
- Carrying out a risk assessment to justify a decision that has already been made
- Using a generic assessment when a site-specific assessment is needed
- Carrying out a detailed quantified risk assessment without first considering whether any relevant good practice was applicable, or when relevant good practice exists
- Making decisions on the basis of individual risk estimates when societal risk is the appropriate measure
- Not involving those with practical knowledge of the process/activity being assessed in the assessment
- Inappropriate use of cost-benefit analysis, such as using cost-benefit analysis to argue that it is acceptable to reduce existing safety standards
- Not doing anything with the results of the assessment or not reviewing the assessment periodically
- Failure to document the rationale behind the risk assessment

Feel free to enrich the above list based on your experience and literature review. You would to avoid committing any of the above offenses in order to obtain a sound risk assessment.

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