Toolbox talk

Risk assessments and method statements

Read it, understand it, follow it, speak up if it's wrong

10 minutes | For: Everyone who carries out work on site

Why it matters

Risk assessments and method statements, often called RAMS, are how the job is planned to be done safely. They only work if the people doing the job have read them, understood them and follow them, and if they're changed when the job changes.

Key points

1. A risk assessment looks at what could cause harm, who could be hurt, and how the risks are controlled.
2. A method statement sets out the safe way of doing the job, step by step, based on the risk assessment.
3. Employers with five or more employees must write down the significant findings of their risk assessment.
4. Method statements suit higher-risk or unusual work. For demolition, written arrangements are required by law.
5. You should be briefed on the RAMS before you start, and be able to ask questions.
6. Follow the agreed method. Don't take shortcuts or change it without checking first.
7. If the job or conditions change, the RAMS may need reviewing before work carries on.
8. Controls should be reviewed if workers spot problems, or after accidents or near misses.

Sources: HSE: Managing risks and risk assessment at work; HSE: Construction, risk assessments and method statements; Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (legislation.gov.uk).

This talk supports, but does not replace, your site-specific risk assessment, method statement, training and supervision. Free to copy and use. **tradefoxapp.com/toolbox-talks/rams**

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Do

- Read and sign the RAMS only once you understand them.
- Ask if anything in the method doesn't match what's in front of you.
- Stop and tell your supervisor if conditions change.
- Use the equipment and controls the method statement lists.
- Suggest a safer or better way if you know one.

Don't

- Don't sign RAMS you haven't read or don't understand.
- Don't change the method on the fly without agreement.
- Don't carry on if the RAMS clearly don't fit the job.
- Don't assume generic paperwork covers this site.

Ask the group

- Have you all read the RAMS for today's work?
- Does anything in the method not match this site?
- What would make you stop and ask for the RAMS to be reviewed?
- Is there a safer way to do any part of this job?

If it goes wrong: If the RAMS don't fit the job, or something unexpected happens, stop work and tell your supervisor. Don't carry on until the risks have been looked at again. If someone is hurt, call 999, get a first aider and report it.

On this site

Nearest first aider _____

Emergency assembly point _____

Site-specific hazards and controls _____

_____

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Go further: Method statements explained: how they differ from RAMS

Sources: HSE: Managing risks and risk assessment at work; HSE: Construction, risk assessments and method statements; Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (legislation.gov.uk).
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Attendance register

Risk assessments and method statements

Site / project _____ Date and time _____

Presented by _____ Company _____

	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

By signing, attendees confirm they took part in this toolbox talk and understood the key points. Keep this record with your site safety file.

Presenter signature _____ Follow-up actions _____

Quick check

Risk assessments and method statements

Tick one answer for each question. Your presenter has the answers.

Name _____ Date _____

1. What does a method statement describe?

- [ ] The price of the job
- [ ] The safe way of doing the job, step by step
- [ ] Who is on holiday

2. Who must write down the significant findings of a risk assessment?

- [ ] Employers with five or more employees
- [ ] Only big companies
- [ ] Nobody

3. Conditions on site have changed from what the RAMS describe. What do you do?

- [ ] Carry on as planned
- [ ] Stop and tell your supervisor so the RAMS can be reviewed
- [ ] Make up a new method yourself

4. When should you sign the RAMS?

- [ ] Straight away to save time
- [ ] Only once you've read and understood them
- [ ] Never

5. When should risk controls be reviewed?

- [ ] Never, once written
- [ ] When workers report problems or after accidents or near misses
- [ ] Only every five years

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For the presenter

Answers and sources

Quick check answers

1. The safe way of doing the job, step by step

A method statement sets out how the work will be done safely, drawing on the risk assessment.

2. Employers with five or more employees

HSE says if you employ five or more people, you must record your significant findings.

3. Stop and tell your supervisor so the RAMS can be reviewed

Controls should be reviewed when things change, so the work stays safe.

4. Only once you've read and understood them

Signing should mean you've been briefed and understand the method, not just that you've seen the paper.

5. When workers report problems or after accidents or near misses

HSE says to consider reviewing controls when workers spot problems, after accidents or near misses, or when things change.

Sources

- HSE: Managing risks and risk assessment at work
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/steps-needed-to-manage-risk.htm
- HSE: Construction, risk assessments and method statements
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/admin.htm
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (legislation.gov.uk)
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/3242/contents

> **Presenting tips:** keep it to about 10 minutes, use real examples from your site, ask the group questions rather than reading everything out, and record attendance on the register.

Read it. Understand it. Follow it.

1. **Know the RAMS before you start**
2. **Never change the method alone**
3. **Job changed? Stop and ask**

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Sources and qualifications

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Scope: Great Britain safety legislation unless a nation is identified. Northern Ireland has separate legislation. Site rules can be stricter than minimum legal duties; use the site assessment, instructions and competent supervision.

A4 applicability: no installation-design requirement is asserted in this talk. Its claims are referenced to the subject-specific sources below.

S1. HSE: Managing risk

Identify-assess-control-record-review, significant findings with five or more employees, communication and changed conditions; key points and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/steps-needed-to-manage-risk.htm

S2. HSE: Construction administration

Risk assessments and proportionate method statements; written demolition arrangements, briefing and review.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/admin.htm