

Managing risks in existing buildings

An overview of UK risk-based legislation for commercial and industrial premises

Steve Manchester





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The research and writing for this publication has been funded by BRE Trust, the largest UK charity dedicated specifically to research and education in the built environment. BRE Trust uses the profits made by its trading companies to fund new research and education programmes that advance knowledge, innovation and communication for public benefit.

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Registered office: The Capitol Building, Oldbury, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 8FZ. www.ihs.com

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or
IHS BRE Press
The Capitol Building
Oldbury
Bracknell
Berkshire RG12 8FZ
Tel: +44 (0) 1344 328038
Fax: +44 (0) 1344 328005
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The Publisher
IHS
Verulam Point
Station Way
St Albans
Herts AL1 5HE
Tel: +44 (0) 1727 733813
Email: brepress@ihs.com

Printed using FSC or PEFC material from sustainable forests.

FB 86
First published 2016
ISBN 978-1-84806-459-1

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The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions from BRE colleagues towards this publication; in particular Chris Scivyer, Andy Dengel, Gary Timmins and Stephen Garvin.

Front cover images

Left: Windows explode due to effects of fire
Top right: Legionella (*Legionella pneumophila*) bacteria
Bottom right: Asbestos fibres

Back cover image

Flooding

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Executive summary

Recent and new health and safety legislation in the EU is all based on the fundamental principle of assessing risk, with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 remaining the primary legislation against which prosecutions are brought by the enforcing authorities in the UK. The EU is now the main driving force behind new UK legislation and a wide range of new health and safety regulations have come into force to implement EU directives.

This guide aims to provide an overview of UK risk-based legislation for existing buildings and their sites, both commercial and industrial. It shows building owners and managers how a coherent and holistic approach to undertaking risk assessments can provide cost savings – from less time spent undertaking and procuring risk assessments, a reduction in employee injuries as a result of assessing the risks (the primary aim of conducting risk assessments being life safety) and improved site and building management.

The guide focuses on a number of key areas:

- fire
- explosion
- asbestos
- legionella
- radon
- noise
- vibration
- flooding
- contaminated land
- environment.

A structured and holistic approach to undertaking risk assessments in these areas leads to cost savings and improved outcomes compared with a piecemeal approach where each area is addressed individually. In summary the benefits are:

- Less disruption to the owner of the business having the assessments done as there are reduced numbers of contractors on site and the assessors can identify the potential solutions covering a number of risk areas in each particular part of the premises being surveyed.
- Money can be saved by reducing time spent finding, engaging and managing numerous separate external contractors.
- More cost-effective pricing of the work by a company that can do all the risk assessments, compared with numerous separate quotes.
- Reduction in time spent undertaking the assessments and reporting by the contractor.
- Generation of synergies – certain control measures work to mitigate the risks in a number of areas, thus potentially reducing the costs from duplication of effort and reduced prices from bulk orders of equipment or other items.
- Pan-business solutions that are elegant and simple rather than complex, piecemeal and uncoordinated.

This is a summary guide to the management of risks. Detailed guidance on evaluating and managing specific hazards is provided in the references section.

1 Introduction

This guide aims to provide a holistic overview of the issues to consider and the techniques and information sources available to improve the management of risks in buildings by the building owner and/or user. This should realise benefits from reduced business losses, reduced insurance premiums, improvements in day-to-day operating costs, improvements in staff welfare (reduced absences due to sick leave) and reduced reactive mitigation measures after an incident.

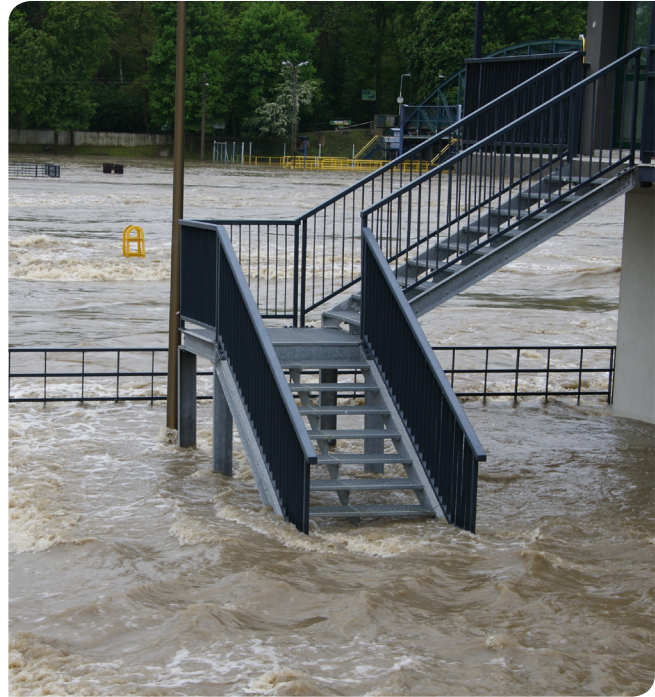
This guide applies to all types of existing non-domestic buildings and premises in the UK from offices, warehouses and industrial/processing sites to transport hubs such as airports and railway stations. The guide covers those risks that can have a major impact on the building or site infrastructure and a significant proportion of its occupants. Due to the wide-ranging nature and use of buildings in the UK, there may be some types of risk that are not covered here, although the general principles for risk assessment will still apply. (Note that risks to occupants from personal 'accidental' occurrences such as trips, falls, manual handling and repetitive strain injuries are not covered. Neither are specific risks arising from electrical and mechanical equipment in so far as they affect an individual person, eg electric shock from faulty equipment or trapping hands in moving machinery.)

There are many different drivers for managing risks in a building or on a site. The three main drivers are life safety, property protection and business continuity. In the UK there are numerous legislative and legal requirements that must be met that are primarily to protect the health, safety and welfare of people working, visiting or living close to non-domestic buildings and sites. By meeting these requirements there are usually additional benefits such as protecting the building itself and equipment inside it, and this may then lead to additional mission and business continuity benefits, as well as improved operational efficiency. There are also actions and procedures that are specific to safeguarding business assets, such as buildings, equipment or software systems, which go further than the life safety requirements of legislation. These requirements are usually driven by corporate governance and the insurance industry and so may be part of a corporate safety plan to reduce the business risk.

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Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 8FZ
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ISBN 978-1-84806-459-1



9 781848 064591