RISK ASSESSMENTS
How to understand the need and apply "Best Practice"

INTRODUCTION

One of the basic building blocks to ensuring that an entity has a chance of ensuring a robust health and safety culture is through good risk assessments (RA) and their control therein. A topic that causes many to shy away from because a risk assessment is seen as being a complicated process, long winded and whose responsibility is it anyway? In short get this section right and the flow for all other documentation becomes far easier.

- **Hazard**   = anything that has the potential to hurt someone or damage something
- **Risk** = what is the likelihood of the hazard hurting someone/something and what is the most likely consequence. (level of damage or injury)
- **Controls** = Things done to remove or minimize the hazard or risk.

SIMPLICITY

5 steps are required to ensure that a risk assessment takes shape, however what must be remembered is that ultimately the risk assessment needs to be **suitable**, **sufficient** and manages **'significant risk'** in the workplace.

- **Identify** the hazards - Any action that could hurt someone or damage property.
- **Assess** the risks - To your workforce, visitors, contractors, or guests.
- **Control** the risk – Take necessary action to ensure risks have been removed.
- **Record** your findings and all action taken to remove/rectify these.
- **Review** your controls on a regular basis and amend as necessary.

The one criterion that is a must through the whole process is to ensure that the workforce is involved in the process. Input from the staff that carry out the task is vital because they will soon tell management what issues they face doing a task.
Your workforce are your **Subject Matter Experts**. Too often risk assessments are produced by managers who believe they 'know' the best way to manage a risk. This often results in the risk assessment not being followed and then the 'short cuts' start to materialize as staff carry out the task in their own way.

A vital part of having the workforce involved is "engagement with the workforce" Without a positively engaged workforce you will find that communication or consultation is inhibited and you are not able to achieve the best results for a safe attraction and workplace.

PROCESS

You should always have only a competent person working their way through the 5 steps outlined above. This person should be asking questions such as: number of incidents/accidents that have occurred due to the task, quality of staff training, the methodology of how the task is carried out and has the task evolved at all to a point where processes have had to change?

As mentioned earlier the words **suitable, sufficient,** and **significant risk** are what a risk assessment must be able to answer. To ensure that this occurs, risk assessments should be specific to the task at hand and to the attraction type they pertain to.

It is crucial to remember that a risk assessment cannot simply be a 'cut and paste exercise. Each and every theme park, water park and family entertainment center is unique in its layout and offering. With this comes the requirement to consult with your workforce and create risk assessments that will ensure a safe venue for every person who visits or works in it.

As an example, **Contractor Services** are perhaps the area that need most scrutiny as their tasks apparently never change. However the various locations that they work in are never the same and each entity has its own working style and along with this its own risks.

Risk assessments also mature over time as staff learn new methods, training courses change, and new rides/attractions are introduced. Your goal when following "Best Practice" is a working environment where accidents in the workplace to staff and guests are either removed or reduced to a level which is as low as reasonably practicable.

WHERE TO START

When should a Risk Assessment be done?

- **New:** Any new process, task, or equipment that is being introduced where there is a possibility of injury to any person or damage to property.
- **Change:** Any time something has been significantly changed in process, equipment, or upgrade.
- **After Incident:** After any incident, to see if any new risk identified or new control to an old risk
- **Review:** At minimum you should review every 12 months to look at anything new that could be done to control the risks

Look at the task or process that you wish to perform a risk assessment for and break down the steps taken to perform the task to get the process completed, from start to finish. Then look at each step and see if anything is a hazard or a risk. Then look at controls to remove or reduce the hazard or risk.

When thinking of controls think of them in this order:

1. **Elimination:** Can I remove the risk so people cannot be hurt, or property damaged?
2. **Substitution:** Can I change something to reduce the risk (e.g. use a safer chemical)?
3. **Engineering:** Can I build something to reduce the risk (e.g. build a fence or barrier)?
4. **Administration:** Any action involving people. Training procedures, briefings, signage etc. What can I do with people to reduce the risk?
5. **PPE**: What personal protective equipment can I use to reduce the risk?

Creating Risk Assessments and reviewing these on a regular basis does not need to be a complicated or long-winded process. If following the recommendations outlined above and utilizing your workforce from the start you will find that the task from start to finish is not only simplified, you will also find that the end product and how risk is managed in your attraction is greatly improved.

Ultimately ensuring that your workforce, guests and your contractors are as safe as should be and continue to remain a top priority for any operation.

This is a two part article, you will find part 2 in our September 2020 news-letter.

Article contributed by Mr. Ross Pattison, Head of MENALAC Safety Committee and HSE Manager. Warner Bros. Abu Dhabi and Mr. Grahame Campbell, Director of HSE, Jumeirah Beach Hotel and Wild Wadi Waterpark