DESIGNER RISK ASSESSMENT

Training Course

Understanding DRAs — CDM 2015 Regulation 9

SAFETY CDM LTD
DESIGN SMART BUILD SAFE

What We Will Cover Today

SAFETY CDM LTD
DESIGN SMART BUILD SAFE

1. What is a Designer Risk Assessment (DRA)?
2. Your legal duty under CDM 2015 Regulation 9
3. The hierarchy of risk control
4. When to complete a DRA and at which design stages
5. Tour of the DRA Register — the 5 tabs
6. How to complete the register — column by column
7. Understanding risk scores
8. Categories of risk and persons at risk
9. Worked example — good vs poor entry
10. Residual risks, CDM Reg 9 checklist, and common mistakes

What is a Designer Risk Assessment (DRA)?

A DRA is a formal record of the health & safety risks a designer identifies during the design process — and the measures taken to eliminate, reduce or manage them.



Who completes it?

Every designer on the project — architect, structural engineer, M&E designer, and any specialist sub-designers.



When is it done?

Throughout design — started at concept and updated at every RIBA stage and whenever the design changes.



What does it cover?

Risks during construction, maintenance, in-use, and demolition — anything the design creates or influences.

Your Legal Duty — CDM 2015 Regulation 9

SAFETY CDM LTD
DESIGN SMART / BUILD SAFE

Regulation 9 applies to EVERY designer on a project — no matter the size or scale

Duty 1

BEFORE you start

Check the client knows their CDM duties. Confirm whether the project is notifiable and if a Principal Designer has been appointed.

Duty 2

DURING design

Identify foreseeable risks. Apply the hierarchy of control. Record significant residual risks in the Designer Risk Register.

Duty 3

SHARE information

Co-operate with other designers and the Principal Designer. Pass risk information to contractors via Pre-Construction Information.

Hierarchy of Risk Control — Reg 9(2)

SAFETY CDM LTD
DESIGN SMART / BUILD SAFE

Work through this hierarchy in order. Your DRA must show your thinking at each level.

1 — ELIMINATE

Design out the hazard completely

Change the design so the risk cannot exist. E.g. use prefabricated off-site elements to avoid work at height.

2 — REDUCE

Reduce the likelihood or severity of harm

If you cannot eliminate, reduce the risk. E.g. specify fixed permanent maintenance access instead of scaffolding.

3 — CONTROL

Pass information to those who need it

Record residual risks in the DRA register so they reach contractors and the Principal Designer.

If a risk cannot be eliminated or reduced, it MUST be recorded in the DRA register and communicated to the Principal Designer.

When to Complete Your DRA — Design Stages

SAFETY CDM LTD
DESIGN SMART / BUILD SAFE

RIBA Stage 1-2

Concept & Preparation

Start the DRA. Flag demolition, contamination, working at height risks. Identify significant constraints early so the design can respond.

RIBA Stage 3

Spatial Coordination

Update DRA as design develops. Review structural decisions, M&E routes, access/egress, and interface risks with other designers.

RIBA Stage 4

Technical Design

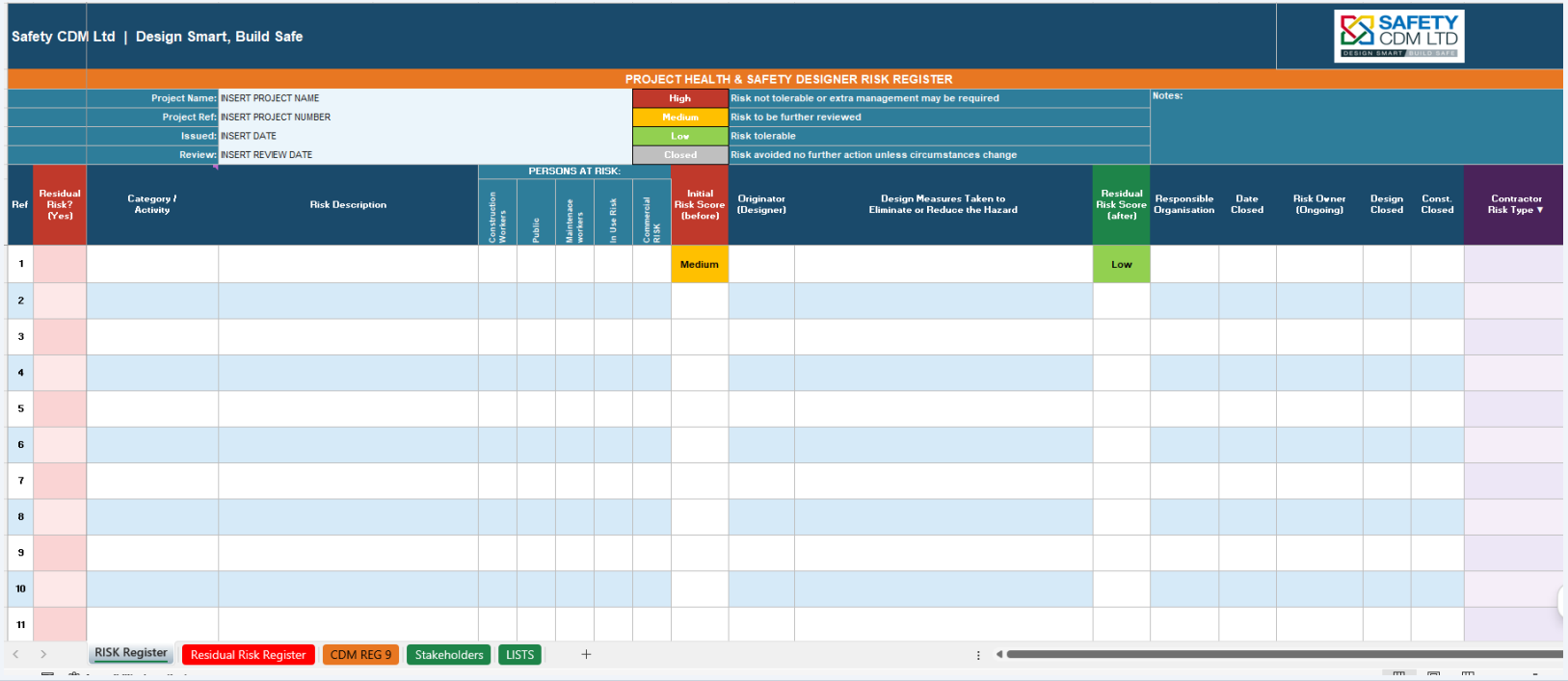
Review and finalise DRA for tender. All residual risks clearly recorded. Passed to Principal Designer for Pre-Construction Information.

Design Changes

Any Design Change

If the design changes for any reason, review and update the DRA. A change to one element can introduce risks elsewhere.

The DRA Register — At a Glance



Safety CDM Ltd | Design Smart, Build Safe

PROJECT HEALTH & SAFETY DESIGNER RISK REGISTER

Project Name:	INSERT PROJECT NAME
Project Ref:	INSERT PROJECT NUMBER
Issued:	INSERT DATE
Review:	INSERT REVIEW DATE

High	Risk not tolerable or extra management may be required
Medium	Risk to be further reviewed
Low	Risk tolerable
Closed	Risk avoided no further action unless circumstances change

Notes:

Ref	Residual Risk? (Yes)	Category / Activity	Risk Description	PERSONS AT RISK: Construction Workers	Public	Maintenance workers	In Use Risk	Commercial RISK	Initial Risk Score (before)	Originator (Designer)	Design Measures Taken to Eliminate or Reduce the Hazard	Residual Risk Score (after)	Responsible Organisation	Date Closed	Risk Owner (Ongoing)	Design Closed	Const. Closed	Contractor Risk Type
1									Medium			Low						
2																		
3																		
4																		
5																		
6																		
7																		
8																		
9																		
10																		
11																		

RISK Register | Residual Risk Register | CDM REG 9 | Stakeholders | LISTS

Key areas: Initial Risk Score (before design measures) | Design Measures Taken (the critical column) | Residual Risk Score (after measures) | Residual Risk? Yes or No

Inside the Register — The 5 Tabs

SAFETY CDM LTD
DESIGN SMART / BUILD SAFE

The register has five tabs. Each plays a specific role — work across all of them:

DRA Register

RISK Register	The main register — record every identified hazard, initial risk score, design measures taken, and residual risk score.
Residual Risk Register	Captures risks that could not be fully resolved by design — these must be managed during construction or in use.
CDM REG 9	A compliance checklist of all Regulation 9 designer duties — your evidence that you have met your legal obligations.
Stakeholders	Lists all designer organisations on the project and tracks receipt of each designer's DRA submission.
LISTS	The dropdown reference library — categories, risk scores, persons at risk. Add new items here; all other sheets update automatically.

Understanding Risk Scores

SAFETY CDM LTD
DESIGN SMART / BUILD SAFE

Every entry gets an Initial Risk Score (before design measures) and a Residual Risk Score (after).

DRA Register

HIGH	Risk is not tolerable. Further design action or management is required. Do not leave this unchallenged — record what you are doing about it. *E.g. structural collapse risk, deep excavation adjacent to public highway*	Score reflects risk AFTER design measures
MEDIUM	Risk needs further review. Design measures have reduced the risk but it warrants close attention and potentially a specific contractor method statement. *E.g. working at height, COSHH materials specified in the design*	Score reflects risk AFTER design measures
LOW	Risk is tolerable. Design measures have adequately reduced the risk. Standard contractor controls are sufficient to manage it. *E.g. minor manual handling, standard welfare provision during construction*	Score reflects risk AFTER design measures
CLOSED	Risk has been designed out entirely. No further action required unless design circumstances change. Record the date it was closed. *E.g. removed roof-level plant — eliminated need for any maintenance access at height*	Score reflects risk AFTER design measures

Completing the Risk Register — Columns 1 to 5

REF	A sequential number used to cross-reference the risk entry to drawings, specifications, or the Residual Risk Register.
RESIDUAL? (Yes)	Mark Yes if this risk carries forward to the Residual Risk Register — i.e. it cannot be fully resolved by design alone.
CATEGORY / ACTIVITY	Select from the dropdown: Working at Height, Structural, Asbestos, Fire, COSHH, etc. Choose what best describes the hazard type.
RISK DESCRIPTION	Describe the specific hazard and how it arises from the design. Be precise: 'Falls during glazed curtain wall installation at Level 3-5' is far better than 'fall risk'.
PERSONS AT RISK	Tick all that apply: Construction Workers / Public / Maintenance Workers / In Use (End Users) / Commercial Risk.

DRA Register

Completing the Risk Register — Columns 6 to 9

INITIAL RISK SCORE (before measures)	Score the risk BEFORE your design measures. This is the baseline — how serious would this be if nothing was done? High / Medium / Low / Closed.
ORIGINATOR (Designer)	Your initials or organisation abbreviation — identifies who raised this risk entry. Use the Stakeholder tab for full contact details.
DESIGN MEASURES TAKEN	The most important column. Describe exactly what you have done in the design to eliminate or reduce the risk. Be specific: what changed, how, and why it reduces the risk.
RESIDUAL RISK SCORE (after measures)	Score the risk AFTER your design measures. If still High or Medium, consider whether more can be done — or record it in the Residual Risk Register.

Completing the Risk Register — Columns 10 to 14

RESPONSIBLE ORGANISATION	Who is responsible for managing this risk going forward? This may be the main contractor, a specialist sub-contractor, or the client organisation.
DATE CLOSED	Date the risk was genuinely resolved or designed out. Leave blank until it is actually closed — do not fill this in prematurely to tidy the register.
RISK OWNER (Ongoing)	The person or organisation who owns this risk and monitors it. Particularly important for residual risks that carry through to the construction stage.
DESIGN / CONST. CLOSED	Two separate tick columns: Design Closed = risk resolved at design stage. Const. Closed = risk handed over to contractor management.
CONTRACTOR RISK TYPE	Dropdown: Standard Contractor Risk or Enhanced Contractor Risk. Enhanced risks require specific method statements and may affect procurement strategy.

Categories of Risk — What's in the Dropdown?

Select the most relevant category for each hazard. More than one entry per category is fine — each hazard should have its own row.

- Working at Height
- Lifting Operations
- Public Protection
- Mechanical & Electrical
- Confined Spaces
- Environmental
- Fit Out / Finishing
- Fire
- Hazardous Materials
- Excavation / Ground Works
- Asbestos
- Temporary Works
- Roofing
- Project / Commercial
- Demolition
- Volatile Compounds / COSHH
- Structural
- Contaminated Land
- Access / Egress
- Facade / Cladding

Add new categories at the bottom of the LISTS tab — all sheet dropdowns update automatically.

Worked Example — A Good DRA Entry

This is what a well-completed row looks like — specific, evidenced, and showing a clear reduction in risk:

Ref	Category	Risk Description	Persons at Risk	Initial Score	Design Measures Taken	Residual Score
1	Working at Height	Falls during installation of glazed curtain wall at Levels 2-5 (up to 18m)	Construction Workers	HIGH	Specified pre-glazed unitised panels assembled off-site. Installation from internal floor slabs using MEWP. Eliminated need for external scaffolding above Level 2.	LOW

Initial: HIGH (before measures)

Specific design decision described

Residual: LOW (after measures)

What makes this entry GOOD:

- Names the specific activity and location (curtain wall, Levels 2-5)
- States the exact design decision taken (unitised panels, MEWP, internal access)
- Shows risk reduced from HIGH to LOW through a clear design measure
- Anyone reading it knows what was done, why, and what the residual position is

What a Poor DRA Entry Looks Like

Compare these two entries. One will satisfy a Principal Designer — the other will not.

POOR ENTRY — this would be challenged or sent back

Category: Working at Height | Risk: Fall risk | Measures: Follow safe working procedures | Residual Score: Medium

- ! Fall risk — no specific activity, no location, no height, no element of the design
- ! Follow safe working procedures — this is a contractor instruction, not a design measure
- ! No evidence the designer applied the hierarchy of control at all
- ! Residual risk still Medium — but nothing has actually been done to reduce it

Your DRA is your professional evidence — it must show what YOU did as a designer, not what the contractor should do.

Better: Specified unitised glazing panels pre-assembled at ground level, craned into position. Eliminated need for operatives working at height during installation. Internal installation access provided from permanent floor slabs at each level.

The Residual Risk Register

What is a residual risk?

- A risk that REMAINS after all reasonable design measures have been applied
- It cannot be fully designed out — but it is known, documented, and managed
- It must be passed to the Principal Designer and included in Pre-Construction Information
- It must still be reviewed at each design stage — circumstances can change

How to use the Residual Risk Register tab

- If Residual Risk? (Yes) is ticked on the main register, copy that entry to this tab
- Score the risk and describe the action required — who needs to manage it and how
- Assign a responsible person (Action On) and a named risk owner
- Tick off the persons at risk (as on the main register)
- This tab forms part of the Residual Risk Register at the end of the project.

CDM Reg 9 Checklist — Proving Compliance

SAFETY CDM LTD
DESIGN SMART BUILD SAFE

The CDM REG 9 tab is your evidence file — complete it alongside the risk register at every stage.

A

Pre-Design — Client Awareness

Regs 9.1-9.3 | Confirm client knows their duties. Check if notifiable. Confirm PD appointed.

B

DRA Process

Regs 9.4-9.7 | Carry out DRA, apply hierarchy, record significant risks, update at each stage.

C

Coordination with Other Designers

Regs 9.8-9.10 | Co-operate with PD. Share risk info across the design team.

D

Information Provision

Regs 9.11-9.13 | Provide Pre-Construction Information. Ensure drawings flag construction risks.

E

Competence and Skills

Regs 9.14-9.15 | Only design what you are competent to design. Check team members skills.

F

Welfare Facilities

Regs 9.16 | Take welfare provision into account when designing the construction sequence.

G

Ongoing Review

Regs 9.17-9.19 | Review DRA at tender stage and after any design or contractor changes.

The Stakeholder & DRA Receipt Register

Every designer on the project must submit their DRA — the Stakeholder tab tracks this.



List all designers

Enter every organisation contributing to design: architect, structural, M&E, civil, and all specialist sub-designers.



Track DRA receipt

The DRA Received column uses Yes / No / Partial. Chase outstanding DRAs before each design gate.



Contact information

Stores contact names, telephone numbers, and email addresses for each design team member.



Audit trail

Provides the Principal Designer with evidence that all designers have fulfilled their Reg 9 obligations.

Common Mistakes — And How to Avoid Them

SAFETY CDM LTD
DESIGN SMART / BUILD SAFE

Common Mistake	What to Do Instead
x Generic risk descriptions	Name the specific activity, location, element, and height / material / process
x Copying contractor controls	Your measures must be design decisions — not follow safe working practices
x Marking Date Closed too early	Only close a risk when it has genuinely been designed out or formally handed over
x Not updating after design changes	Any design change — however minor — may introduce a new risk. Review the DRA.
x Leaving the Residual Register blank	If a risk stays High or Medium after measures, it belongs in the Residual tab
x One designer completing all entries	Each discipline must raise their own risks — the DRA shows individual accountability

Key Takeaways

1. A DRA is a legal requirement for every designer under CDM 2015 Reg 9 — not optional.
2. Always apply the hierarchy: Eliminate first, then Reduce, then pass Control information to others.
3. Your entries must be specific. Name the activity, location, and exactly what design decision you took.
4. Update the register at every RIBA stage and whenever the design changes.
5. Residual risks that cannot be designed out must be recorded and passed to the Principal Designer.
6. Complete the CDM Reg 9 Checklist alongside the register — it is your compliance evidence.
7. The Stakeholder tab ensures every designer has submitted their DRA before project milestones.

SAFETY CDM LTD

DESIGN SMART BUILD SAFE

Any Questions?

Contact us on info@cdm2015regs.co.uk

Or call 01494 445774